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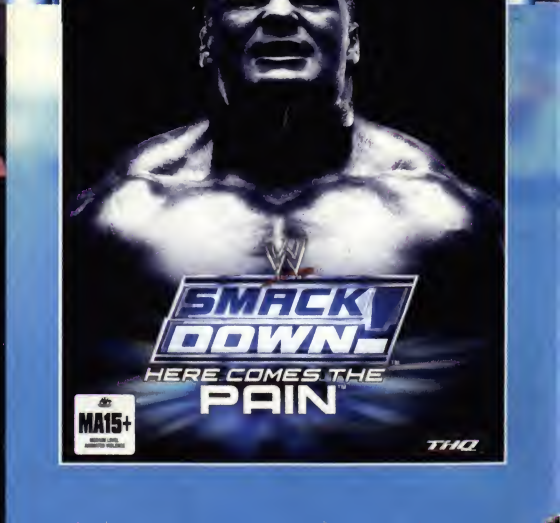


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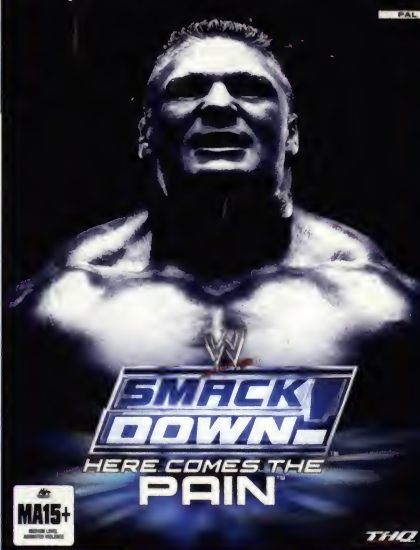
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PlayStation 2



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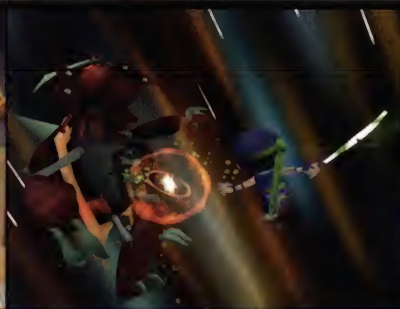
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THE SIMS 2



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WRITE TO

Derwent Howard Publishing Pty, Ltd,
P.O. Box 1037 Bondi Junction,
NSW, 2022
Telephone :: 02 9386 4666
Fax :: 02 9386 4288
Email :: OPS2@derwenthoward.com.au

EDITORIAL

EDITOR :: **Richie Young**
DEPUTY EDITOR :: **Narayan Pattison**
narayan@derwenthoward.com.au
STAFF WRITER :: **Tristan Ogilvie**
tristan@derwenthoward.com.au
TIPS EDITOR :: **James Ellis**
james@derwenthoward.com.au
SUB EDITOR :: **Ed Lomas**

ART DIRECTOR :: **Michael Devries**
michael@derwenthoward.com.au
DESIGNER :: **Matti Puckridge**
CREATIVE DIRECTOR :: **Jane Menon**
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS ::
Richie Young :: **Michael Devries**
OFFICE MANAGER :: **Cathy Plane**

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS :: **Anthony O'Connor** :: **Nick O'Shea** :: **Paul Frew** ::
Ronan Mason :: **Luke Reilly** :: **Kris Ashton** :: **Michelle Starr** :: **Mikey Foley** ::
Michael Griesser :: **Karl Witherstone**

SHOUT OUTS :: **Natas Kaupas** :: **Lu Edge** ::
Darren McInerney :: **Andy Foreman** ::
Pat Torrens :: **Axl Rose** :: **Karaoke** ::
Josh Hodge :: **Bacardi** :: **Air Conditioning** ::
Stu and Tammy Whitmore :: **Sally Robinson** :: **Will Ferrell** :: **Daniel Reece**

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Customer Order Line :: 1800 007 820
(Local call cost within Australia)
Online Orders ::
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ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING MANAGER :: **Paul Hardy**
paul@derwenthoward.com.au
Call advertising on :: 02 9386 4666
Fax advertising on :: 02 9386 4288

THE SUITS

DIRECTOR :: **Jim Flynn**
DIRECTOR :: **Nathan Berkley**
FINANCIAL DIRECTOR :: **Gary Peroy**
CIRCULATION MANAGER :: **Karen Day**
PRODUCTION MANAGER :: **Sue Wall**
FINANCIAL CONTROLLER :: **Ray Gillis**

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Distributed throughout Australia by Gordon and Gotch. Printed in Australia by Webstar. Distributed throughout New Zealand by IMD.

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"... and when it comes to reviews we'll more than happily call a dog whenever we see one."

EDITOR'S LETTER



Dishing the dirt on what's happening in the world of videogames is what this job is all about. There's nothing more satisfying for us than to uncover new game details, screenshots and game art for you first, and when it comes to reviews we'll more than happily call a dog whenever we see one.

Thanks to help from our close contacts in Australia and around the world, as well as OPS2's network of industry spies, we've managed to piece together new information on the biggest games coming in 2004. If you own a PlayStation 2 and plan to buy a game or two this year, you must read this feature (starts page 30).

Not only are we revealing some of the screenshots for the very first time anywhere in the world, we're also able to categorically confirm the existence of some other games. Recently in some unofficial magazines and websites, both *The Getaway 2* and *V8 Supercars Race Driver 2* have been rumoured to be NOT coming to the PlayStation 2. Unsurprisingly, those rumours are complete nonsense and you can see the exclusive screenshots for yourself right here.

Another game rumoured on websites has been the next instalment in the *Grand Theft Auto* series, *GTA: Sin City*. We can lay those those rumours too – the next *GTA* will NOT be set on a city based in Vegas.

Make no mistake, OPS2 has already seen and played games that other videogames press won't get any access to until at least E3, which is held in May. And when E3 does finally roll around, we'll have exclusive access to even more games there. With our playable demos OPS2 is, and always will be, the premier source for all things concerning PlayStation.

Don't waste your time scouring other sources for PlayStation news. Unless you're reading it in *Official*, it ain't worth reading.

Richie Young

RICHIE YOUNG
Editor

WHO'S DISHING THE DIRT



NARAYAN PATTISON

A keen dog lover (his dog's names are Crash and Clank), Narayan has unwittingly become addicted to *A Dog's Life*. Don't worry, we're as surprised as you are.



TRISTAN OGILVIE

Tristan is our resident writer who usually churns through his fair share of typing each issue. His bleeding fingers (he's also guitar mad) now match his sore thumbs.



MICHAEL DEVRIES

OPS2's annual Christmas holidays are generally wild and debauchorous affairs. Michael managed to take it to the next level though. One month later and he's still recovering!



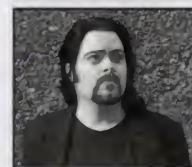
LUKE REILLY

Luke celebrated new year's eve by running through the streets of Brisbane butt-naked (as you do). He managed to avoid arrest after finding an abandoned bike [eww].



MICHELLE STARR

Michelle hasn't been doing herself any favours here at OPS2 Towers. She strolls in, collects some games, then proceeds to beat everyone at *TimeSplitters 2*. How about easing up a little, huh?



ANTHONY O'CONNOR

It took Anthos weeks to get over the loss of missing out on the UK *Juiced* press trip (turn to page 10 for the scoop) but he managed to recover in time for his best New Year's ever!



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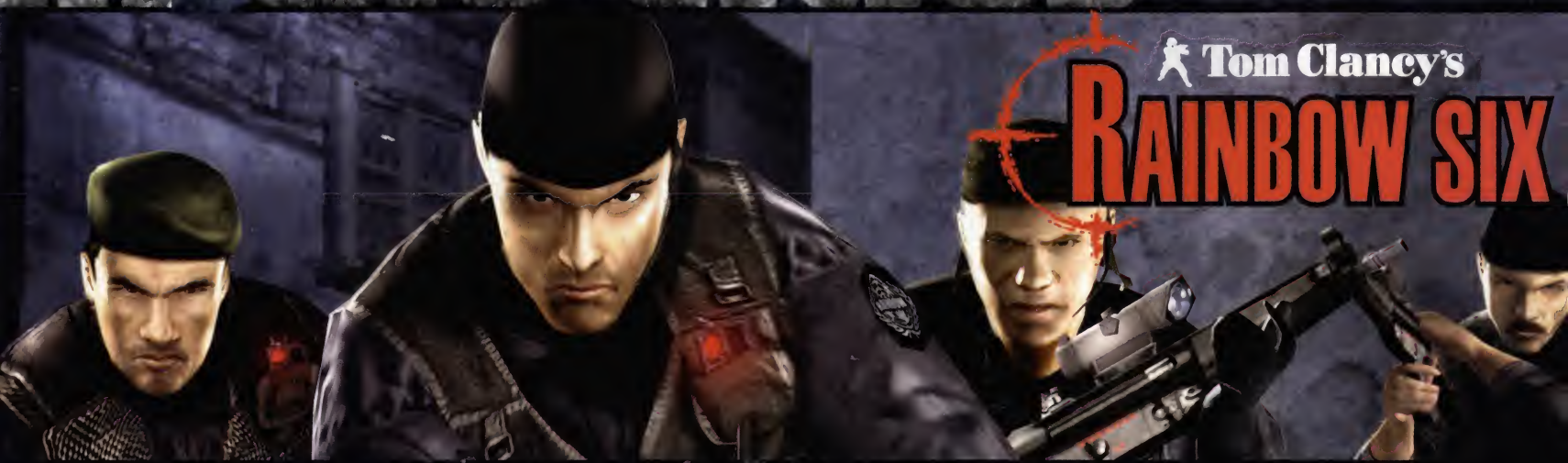
With an OPS2 subscription you can get 13 issues at just \$9.62* each. That's a MASSIVE 30% off the cover price!
Every new subscriber goes into the draw to win \$5999 worth of widescreen television.
Turn to page 84 for all the details!

You will fight them in the jungles...

Tom Clancy's
**GHOST
RECON**



...in the cities...



Tom Clancy's
RAINBOW SIX


...in the darkness.

Tom Clancy's
**SPLINTER
CELL**



It's not a game.

It's Clancy.

PlayStation 2 



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PlayStation 2



on the dvd

PLAYABLE DEMOS

WRC 3



PUBLISHER: SONY
GAME TYPE: RACING
OUT: NOW
PLAYERS: 1 (FULL GAME 1-4)

THE FIRST WRC GAME WAS ALREADY A VERY CLASSY

racer and yet Sony has still managed to improve and enhance the experience with each sequel. See for yourselves how far the turbo-charged series has come with our exclusive demo of its third edition – the game also scored an Impressive 9/10 In OPS2#22. Jump into either Sebastian Loeb's Citroen Zsara or Francois Duval's Ford Focus RS and tear up the track over two stages; one in the mountains of Italy and the other in the gruelling gravel terrain of Turkey. Hop In, belt up and get to it!



SOUL CALIBUR II



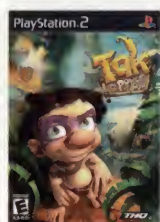
PUBLISHER: EA
GAME TYPE: FIGHTING
OUT: NOW
PLAYERS: 1-2

WE HAPPEN TO THINK THAT THIS IS THE BEST DAMN FIGHTING

game ever and once you've tucked into the demo we're certain you'll agree. Get stuck into the arcade mode with the beastly Nightmare or the delightful Cassandra. Sharpen your swords!



TAK & THE POWER OF JUJU



PUBLISHER: THQ
GAME TYPE: PLATFORM
OUT: FEBRUARY
PLAYERS: 1

THE TITLE SOUNDS A BIT LIKE THE NAME OF A BAD '80S COVER

band but don't let that put you off. Tak's actually the newest platform hero on the block, trying to knock off Ratchet with a club and shoot a suppressing blowdart into Jak's buttocks. In our demo, you'll have to guide young Tak through a treetop village level. Here, you'll find yourself doing such Amazonian pastimes as riding rhinos, using sheep to power strange machines and making friends with a monkey. Just don't spank it ...

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004



PUBLISHER: EA
GAME TYPE: SPORTS
OUT: NOW
PLAYERS: 1-2 (FULL GAME 1-8)

IT'S HANDS-DOWN THE BEST FIFA GAME EVER AND OUR DEMO GIVES

you a six-minute half to prove yourself worthy of a Champions League spot. Take to the pitch as either AC Milan or Juventus and set the glorious San Siro stadium alight with your dazzling skills.



POP IDOL



PUBLISHER: ATARI
GAME TYPE: RHYTHM
OUT: FEBRUARY
PLAYERS: 1-4

OKAY, SO YOU'VE MADE FUN OF MILLSY AND THAT CHICK WHO'S

really a dude, now it's time to put your talent on the line and prove you've got what it takes. Grab a snappy outfit for your singer, choose a song and step into the limelight. You've got three rounds in this demo ... Can you make it to the final?



We've got a pretty diverse mix on the playable DVD for you this month; the comic book-style shoot-'em-up action of XIII, the high speed thrills of WRC 3, the sword-clashing epic that is Soul Calibur II and the slot car (yep, I did say slot car) mayhem of Grooverider are just a few of the treats in this banquet of entertainment that awaits you.

We've also stuck an exclusive new level of Timesplitters 2 in our Downloader section – you won't find it anywhere else, folks! We're allowing you to play the hottest new titles and breathing life back into your dusty old games! If only we were this good with women ...

Tristan Ogilvie

TRISTAN OGILVIE
Staff Writer

PS To use this DVD, load it up on your PS2. Then scroll between games and rolling demos with the ↓ and ↑ keys. To choose within a section use ← and →. Press ⊗ to start up your choice. Please note, you may have to reset your PS2 after some demos.

YOUR DISC

Every Issue, Official PlayStation 2 Magazine brings you something no other magazine can – playable demos. Offering exclusive levels, tracks and missions, our playable DVD enables you try the very latest PS2 games before you buy, often weeks, even months before release. Why risk your hard-earned cash on a \$100 game when you can try it out on our cover-mounted DVD? From GT3 and MGS2 to TimeSplitters 2 and Final Fantasy X, we've always featured playable demos of the games that matter. Throw in top quality video footage of the hits of the future and our DVD is the best bargain on the newsagent's shelves.

DISC PROBLEMS?

If your disc isn't working properly, simply send it back to this address for a replacement.

Demo Disc Returns

Official PlayStation 2 Magazine
P.O. Box 1037 Bondi Junction,
NSW, 2022

OTHER MAGAZINES LET YOU WATCH OPS2 LETS YOU PLAY



PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
GAME TYPE: **SHOOTER**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1 (FULL GAME OFFLINE 1-2/FULL GAME ONLINE 1-4)**

XIII

IT'S STYLISH, IT'S INNOVATIVE, and it's brilliant fun to play. We've managed to snag the first level in it's entirety for you to try. All you have to do is exit the hut at the beginning and make your way down the wooden walkways to the truck parked on the beach. It's as simple as that ... Or is it?



PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI**
GAME TYPE: **DRIVING/SHOOTING**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-2**

STARSKY & HUTCH

BEING BIG FANS OF BEN STILLER AND OWEN WILSON, we thought we'd give you another taste of this funky action game in honour of the upcoming feature film starring the comedic duo. Your demo mission is to tear around Bay City, tailing a joyrider and taking him out in less than four minutes.



PUBLISHER: **TBC**
GAME TYPE: **RACING**
OUT: **TBC**
PLAYERS: **1 (FULL GAME 1-4)**

GROOVERIDER

THE VERY MENTION OF SLOT CARS OVERWHELMS US: so many hours spent zooming around the Scalextric set and tormenting the cat with it when we were kids. Now *Grooverider* is here to rekindle our passion for hurtling plastic cars around at warp speed.



PUBLISHER: **SONY**
GAME TYPE: **SHOOTER**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1 (FULL GAME ONLINE 2-16)**

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS

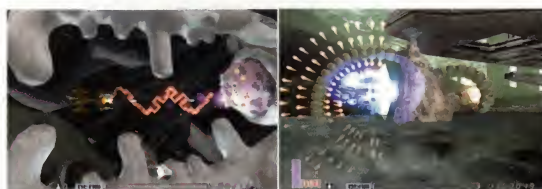
SLIP ON YOUR THERMAL UNDERWEAR, study your mission briefings and infiltrate a terrorist base deep in the hostile terrain of Alaska to collect vital intelligence. This one level demo is equal parts stealth and all-out action as you take the lead of a four-man Special Ops team. Think you're ready to take command?



PUBLISHER: **TBC**
GAME TYPE: **ARCADE SHOOTER**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**

R-TYPE: FINAL

THE R-TYPE SERIES FEELS LIKE IT'S BEEN AROUND FOREVER and at a rough guess we'd say that *Final* is probably the 347th instalment. Although the series is old, the gameplay certainly isn't and it's still loads of fun blasting monstrous spaceships to bits.



REEL FOOTAGE

Trailers for the games of tomorrow. Time to sit back and enjoy the show ...

SOCOM 2

Once you've played through the demo of the original you can sit back and check out what's in store for the next campaign. Bigger and more brutal guns is just the beginning ...

METAL ARMS

Watch this video of one small robot making scrap metal out of lots of other robots. We think it's hilarious, and you will too.

GHOSTHUNTER

Here's another glimpse at Sony's new spectral fright-fest. Think your nerves can handle another dose?

ARC THE LAD:

The *Arc the Lad* series was previously confined to just the US and Japan. Now with it heading to our shores you can see what the fuss is all about.

REVIEW
ON
P76!

DOWNLOADER

To access the saves below just pop your memory card into your PS2 and scroll through the disc menus until you reach the Downloads section. Now highlight the save you want and press ⓧ. Too easy!

TIMESPLITTERS 2

David Doak, head honcho on the outstanding *TimeSplitters 2* has personally designed a brand new TS2 level especially for you! Don't worry, we already thanked him for you. The level is titled 'Assassination & Retrieval', and is available in all game modes, including story mode where you'll have to actually use some stealth and avoid detection because one of the mission objectives is to not kill any of the soldiers. Cool!

use this save to access all kinds of stuff in Sony's groovy toe-tapper.

STAR WARS: CLONE WARS

We've opened up every single level of this interstellar shooter without using a single Jedi mind trick.

RTX: RED ROCK

This save has every level of LucasArts' adventure game homage to '70s sci-fi flicks unlocked.

PRIMAL

Skip the bulk of this game and go straight to the final level, where you'll find leading lady Jen kitted to the max.

WWE SMACKDOWN! SHUT YOUR MOUTH

Step aside Kiebler, there's a new wrestling hottie in town. Get *OPS2*'s specially created dominatrix Miss *OPS2*.

AMPLITUDE

Can't quite grasp the rhythm? No matter,



loading...

EDITED BY NARAYAN PATTISON

INFO NUDGE

RINGS TO RETURN IN 2004

You may have been under the impression that EA's *The Lord of The Rings: Return of The King* would be the final instalment in the videogame series. You were wrong. EA's Redwood Studios is currently hard at work producing another *Rings* game, tentatively titled *The Lord of The Rings Trilogy*. Apparently the new game will be an action adventure with RPG elements, much like the previous games. Let's hope that EA make this one online for Aussie gamers this time ...



SHARE YOUR JUNK

Datel, the third-party manufacturer renowned for its Action Replay cheat code system, has developed a unique utility for Sony's Eye Toy called *Junk TV*. *Junk TV* enables users to film video messages and send them to other PS2 owners via the PS2 online service. Provided it's no more than a minute in length, gamers can share soap-box rants, karaoke performances or even game tips via Datel's own Max TV server. We'll keep you in the loop!



TWO WHEELS OF FURY

Remember *Road Rage*? Moscow-based developer Akella certainly seems to and now it's putting its own twist on the motorcycle-based carnage in the forthcoming *Axle Rage*. The setting, a post-apocalyptic megalopolis, might be as unoriginal as the game's premise, but *Axle Rage* differs from its two-wheeled roots by allowing players to get off their bikes and engage enemies using special attacks, melee weapons and firearms. *Axle Rage* is set to ride into town sometime towards the end of 2004.

APES SET TO ESCAPE AGAIN

News from Japan suggests that Sony is hard at work producing a new addition to the *Ape Escape* series. It's not a direct sequel, but a follow on from an offshoot to the series, *Piposaru 2001*, which was never released outside of Japan. The new game, titled *Piposaru Olympia: Gekitou Gacha Mecha Athlete* can be roughly translated to *Madcap Monkey Olympia: Fierce Fight Gadget Athlete*, and will feature cel-shaded graphics – a first for the series. No news on an English conversion and Aussie yet. Don't worry, OPS2 will certainly be trying its best to it released!



You can almost smell the burning rubber ... maybe you should check your stove

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

MEAN STREETS

Acclaim tears up the tarmac with its new street racer

WITH DVDS OF 2 FAST 2 FURIOUS

FLYING OFF THE SHELVES faster than a nitrous-fuelled Nissan Skyline and tens of thousands of PS2 owners feeling the need to spend on the *Need for Speed: Underground*, it's starting to look like street racing might just be popular. And in America, the street

racing scene is a billion dollar industry – that's the real 'get under the bonnet, tweak the gears and comb your hair with engine grease' street racing we're talking about.

Acclaim's mean machine is called *Juiced* because that's exactly how you'll feel when you get to play this adrenalin soaked racer. It focuses on the legal side of the sport – so don't expect to be dodging cops and playing chicken with oncoming trucks – but do expect to hurtle around the street circuits in more than 50 fully licensed, fully modifiable and fully damageable cars. *Juiced* focuses heavily on the respect you build up by becoming the best racer on the street. If you haven't proved yourself to the other racers then they won't even let you on the road, so you'll need to get out there and win some respect by throwing down more doughnuts than Homer Simpson.

The game also sets itself apart from other street racers by introducing a unique

team racing system. You race alongside two other drivers who are on your team and can be given commands mid-race. Make sure you burn some rubber on your way back to the newsagent next month when we will be revealing the two exclusive Australian cars to be included in *Juiced*. **A**



The real-time reflections are absolutely stunning



STOP THE PRESSES

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS


Location and title revealed!

PACK YOUR BAGS GTA FANS, WE'VE GOT YOUR DESTINATION. After more than 12 months of speculation and a whole heap of internet forum bickering, the name of the next instalment in the world conquering *Grand Theft Auto* series has been confirmed – sort of.

There have been plenty of people tipping the game to be set in the San Andreas; a city modelled on Los Angeles. This theory was easy to subscribe to due, to San Andreas being the third playable city in the original *GTA*, along with Liberty City (from *GTAIII*) and Vice City (*GTAIII*'s 'prequel'). The San Andreas name has

been given further credibility by the recent patent Rockstar has taken out on the name "*Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*".

New rumours that the next *GTA* game would be called *Sin City* were ignited when internet retailer Amazon UK listed "*Grand Theft Auto: Sin City*" on its site but this is highly unlikely to be the real name.

Take 2 Interactive could neither confirm or deny either title for the game but *OPS2* is tipping *GTA: San Andreas* as the far more likely alternative. Flick to page 34 to read our thoughts on what the features of the game might be. 



MOVIE MURMURS

The latest news and rumours in the world of film and DVD

● **JOEL SILVER**, filthy rich producer of *The Matrix* trilogy has confirmed that there will be a box set of all three films, packed with even more extras and maybe even a brand new transfer of the original film. So Silver should get considerably more rich.

● **M. NIGHT SHAYAMALAN**, the director of *The Sixth Sense* and *Signs*, has a new movie on the way called *The Village*. Starring Joaquin Phoenix and Sigourney Weaver, the story of *The Village* continues the director's passion for the supernatural and unknown by featuring a mythical race of creatures that reside in the woods.

● **PETER JACKSON**, director of the massively successful *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy has hinted that he would like to bring J.R.R. Tolkien's other famous story *The Hobbit* to the silver screen. Judging by his success with the trilogy we're pretty confident it will happen.

MAGIC MUSHROOM

PS3 REVEALED?


Take a sneak peak at Sony's next gaming monster

THE PLAYSTATION 3 WILL HAVE A THREE-DISC MULTI-CHANGER, Bluetooth technology and internet connectivity. Perhaps. We can't really say for sure, as these images and information come not from Sony, but design consultancy seymourpowell at the request of our sister magazine T3.

Dubbed the 'Sony Network PlayStation', it features games on mini-DVDs but remains backwards compatible with PSone and PS2 games. The upper section of the console screws onto the base to cover unsightly ports, and the base itself contains a new cooling system that negates the need for a fan and makes the PS3 virtually silent.

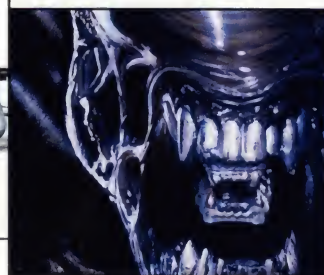
Memory cards are replaced by Sony Memory Sticks, and a hard drive and broadband adapter are built into the console along with lightening fast chips from IBM and NVIDIA powering the visuals.

The console itself is mushroom shaped, and looks like it would be great

for resting your drink on, or favourite gaming snack. Unfortunately we've got a pretty long wait until Sony unveils its official design. Sigh. 




The Dual Shocks are now wireless and feature headset inputs



● **THE BUZZ CONTINUES TO BUILD** for the forthcoming sci-fi epic, *Aliens vs. Predator*. The film itself is still in its early stages, but we do know that it is set in Antarctica and stars Lance Henriksen, who played the android Bishop in the *Alien* films.

● **WRESTLING BUFFS AND HONORARY JACKASSES** will delight at the news that WWE Superstar The Rock and famous idiot Johnny Knoxville are teaming up in *Walking Tall*, a remake of a '70s vigilante movie of the same name that focuses on one man's crusade to rid his country of corruption.

● **THE LAZIEST CAT IN THE WORLD** is headed to the big screen. Garfield, the feline with a penchant for lasagne and witty comments, is CGI-ing his way into a live action movie, starring alongside Breckin Meyer and Jennifer Love Hewitt.

Don't feel too depressed, at least comedic genius Bill Murray is supplying the overweight cat's voice. 

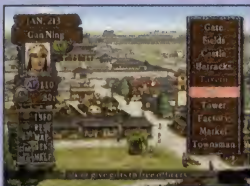
WANT MORE?
Turn to page 80 for our monthly DVD round up.

FIRST PS3 GAME CONFIRMED
UK based developer Climax has been the first company in the world to confirm that it is working on a game for the PlayStation 3. The game is currently known under the working title of *Avalon*, and is apparently a vehicle-based affair including land, sea and air modes of transport. Climax claims to be so far into development that it already has a working prototype; however it is yet to secure a publisher for the title.



SHREK STRIKES BACK

If you were to come up with a game based on the upcoming *Shrek 2* feature film, it would probably be a platform romp, or a kart racer, or maybe even a mini-game based party collection. But not the folks over at Luxoflux – they're taking the popular licence and turning it into a squad-based action adventure. Yes, the developer of last year's action epic *True Crime* will allow fans to take control of a team of four characters including the big green ogre himself and visit locations from the films and beyond. Four-player modes will also be supported.



ROMANCE ISN'T DEAD

The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* series, which began life in 1985 and has made appearances on the PC, NES, SNES, PSone and Dreamcast, is to have its eighth incarnation released on the PS2. *Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII* will allow up to eight players to take part in the historical simulation set amidst the warring states of 2nd Century China. Taking one of a number of different roles, from proud officers to rogues, players must achieve the ultimate goal of the unification of China.



KONAMI SNARES SHAMAN KING SERIES

Hiroyuki Takel's *Shaman King*, the internationally acclaimed anime series about an unassuming student named Yoh Asakura who possesses secret magic powers, has been licensed to Konami to be translated into a series of games for the PS2. The yet to be titled first game will be developed by Konami Computer Entertainment Japan, which was also responsible for other anime-based titles such as the popular *Yu-Gi-Oh!* series.

loading...

THE WILD WEST

BETTER DEAD THAN RED

Rockstar rescues Red Dead Revolver

IT'S BEEN A LONG WAIT FOR ALL YOU WANNABE GUNSLINGERS and desperados, but the stylish, western gun-fighting extravaganza *Red Dead Revolver* is one step closer to you all thanks to Rockstar San Diego.

Despite strong industry buzz and a loyal fan following the title was dropped from its original developer Capcom in 2003. Fortunately Rockstar San Diego has prevented it from saddling up and riding off into the sunset, and we should see it on Aussie shores towards the middle of this year.

Red Dead Revolver is a fast paced third person shooter that

attempts to capture the feel of the popular 'spaghetti westerns' of yesteryear. It should fill a gaping hole in a PS2 line up presently devoid of any spur-strappin' quick-drawin' Wild West shoot-em'-ups.

One of the standout features of the gameplay is the ability to target individual areas of an enemy's body; so you can nail them right between the eyes, blast their revolver out of their hands or just blaze away at their heels and make 'em dance. Yee-haw!

Fun fact: The main character's name is Red Hand, but he got that name from gunslinging. We swear. ♫



HACK JOB

COUGH! HACK! WHEEZE! HACK!

Meet an infection you'll actually want to catch

IF THE MATRIX HAS TAUGHT US ANYTHING, it's that spreading one universe over several types of medium doesn't ensure a quality product. The first film rocked, but the videogame was flawed, the anime collection was sub-par and the subsequent movie sequels just plain sucked. You know we're right, fanboy.

Hopefully *Project .hack* won't suffer the same consequences. Its story is set to be told across an anime TV show and comic book series, along with four videogame titles from Atari. The first *.hack* (pronounced 'dot hack') videogame will be called *.hack//INFECTION*, and will pick up from where the 26 part anime series leaves off.

The story revolves around the main characters Kite and Orca, schoolmates who find themselves absorbed in a virtual online world. When Orca is attacked by a virtual monster in cyberspace; his flesh and bone body becomes comatose in the real world, leaving Kite to battle on through the virtual world to attempt to save him.

Intriguingly the developers are claiming that the *.hack* series will have all the traits of a Massively Multiplayer Online RPG without actually being an online game. Well, they've certainly got us baffled. Not that that's hard. ♫

THE TOP TEN

JAMES BOND GADGETS

- 1. X-RAY GLASSES (THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH)**
How about it science geeks? Forget the electric car, we want to be able to read our fortunes without opening the cookie.
- 2. EJECTOR SEAT (GOLDFINGER)**
Oh, so you don't like my driving? What's that? You want to change the radio station? SPROINGGG! See you later ...
- 3. EXPLOSIVE KEYRING (THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS)**
Detonates whenever someone wolf whistles near it. Lucky the OPS2 team doesn't carry them on our keychains, otherwise we'd be dead men! Eh, ladies?
- 4. CROCODILE SUBMARINE (OCTOPUSSY)**
Comes in handy if you ever want to break into Steve Irwin's place. You know, to slip an explosive keyring into his shirt pocket.
- 5. ERICSSON MOBILE PHONE (TOMORROW NEVER DIES)**
This baby acts as a remote control for Bond's BMW. Sure, but can it play the theme from *The Flintstones* as a ringtone?
- 6. MAGNETIC WRISTWATCH (LIVE AND LET DIE)**
Bond was super cool when he unzipped that girl's dress with it. You wouldn't look quite as cool if you were undoing your fly with it at a public urinal.
- 7. SKI-POLE RIFLE (THE SPY WHO LOVED ME)**
Would go great with that pair of chainsaw skis and bulletproof coveralls you've got gathering dust in the garage.
- 8. WRIST DART GUN (MOONRAKER)**
Fires a dart when you move your wrist. Can have disastrous results if someone happens to wave to you and you forget you're wearing it.
- 9. GRAPPLING BELT (GOLDENEYE)**
It keeps your pants from falling down and fires a grappling rope up to 75 feet. Should ensure that no matter how old and fat he gets, the ladies will never be able to escape Bond's charms.
- 10. DENTONITE TOOTHPASTE (LICENCE TO KILL)**
It looks like a tube of triple stripe but it actually contains plastic explosive. Don't forget to rinse!



UNCOVERING THE LATEST
PS2 NEWS EVERY MONTH

MAKING MUSIC

SING FOR YOUR SUPPER

Or even just to annoy your neighbours

WE'VE ALL BEEN CRITIQUING

THE PERFORMANCES of the contestants on the *Australian Idol* and subsequent *World Idol* television shows, but it's time to leave the comfort and protection of your couch and step into the limelight with Sony's *Singstar*.

Let's just get one thing clear, though it does feature over 40

licensed tracks and comes bundled with two USB microphones, *Singstar* doesn't simply turn your PS2 console into a karaoke machine – it's more of a vocals-based game. Thanks to the brilliance of its pitch recognition software, *Singstar* will score you based on how close you are to the melody. You can even

battle it out in a duel with a friend!

To top things off you can set up your Eye Toy and make your own music video while you belt out one of the many Top 40 hits or classic tunes. It certainly seems that Sony consistently ensures that the PS2 has the most unique experiences available for videogame lovers. Bless them. **B**

Aloha Tiki Club
204 Palm Shores North

PlayStation 2
Take On Me
My Guy



You can record and playback your performance. Prepare to be embarrassed...

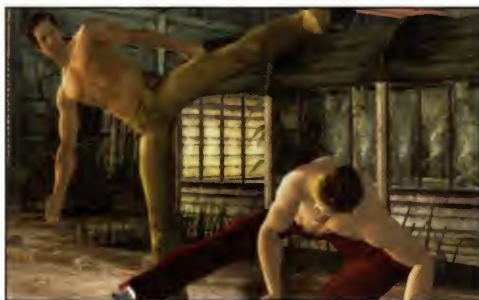


It's fun to stay at the Y-M-C-A
It's fun to stay at the Y-M-C-A

THE FIRST RULE

JOIN THE CLUB

Just don't talk about it



WELL SLAP OUR BITCHTITS TILL THEY TURN

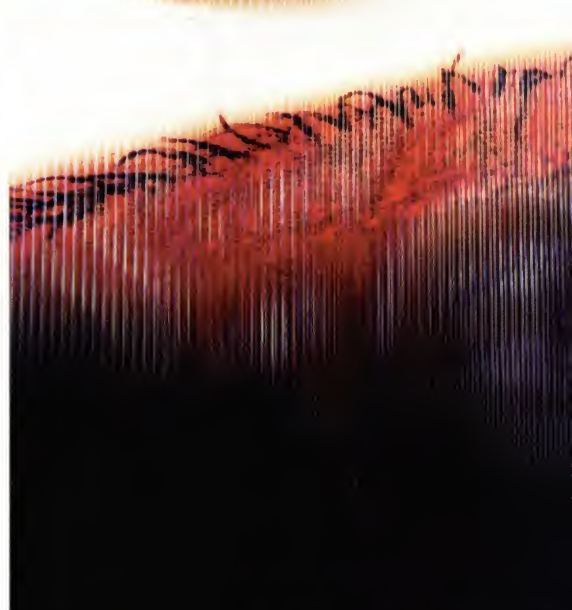
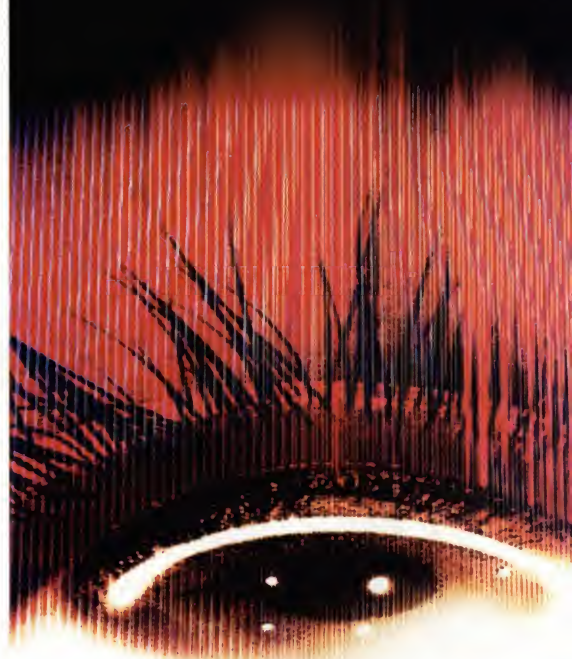
PURPLE, Vivendi is making a game based on the classic modern day thriller, *Fight Club*! Yep, the feature film that stars Edward Norton and (Swoon!) Brad Pitt is being made into a no-holds-barred brawler for the PS2.

The developer, Genuine Games, claims that the game will combine the characters, setting and bare-knuckled brawling from the film and appeal to both casual and hardcore gamers alike. Right. We think they've taken a few liberties with the moves though; we don't remember too many skilled karate kicks to

the face in the movie. In fact from what we can recall the action was pure schoolyard scrap-style, and much bludgeoning to the head with greased-up fists.

No matter, if you're into sweaty men with their shirts off pawing at each other, and you don't want to sneak into the Australian Cricket Team's dressing room to see it, then this could be the game for you. If, on the other hand, you're purely a fan of the novel and believe that there should never have been a film, let alone a videogame, then you're probably feeling a bit like Jack's raging bile duct right about now. **B**

DO YOU LIKE TO WATCH?



MY LITTLE EYE

MA 15+

UNIVERSAL

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MIDWAY OPTS FOR PSI-OPS

Midway seems to have read our minds and changed the name of its innovative action game from the pun-based *ESPionage* to *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy*. *Psi-Ops* promises to offer a unique take on the action genre by allowing players to use psychic abilities to overcome obstacles; from hurling enemies through the air via telekinesis to setting things on fire *Stephen King's Carrie*-style. Of course, there'll be plenty of guns at hand too in case you find yourself with a headache.



FIGURES BUILT FOR ACTION

What's better than two deadly secret agents? Two deadly yet ridiculously attractive female secret agents based on action figures! That's exactly what the two stars of Konami's *Cy Girls* are; agents Ice, the weapons master, and Aska, the ninja, who find themselves in a deadly mission of espionage and adventure spanning the globe and beyond. The game is set to be released as a two DVD set; one for each of the two character's adventures.



SONY GOES TROPPO

Sony, the giant electronics company responsible for the best in accessible filmmaking technology and of course our beloved PlayStation 2, is the major sponsor of this year's Trofest. Now in its 12th year, Sony Trofest is the world's largest short film festival and is renowned for catapulting its finalists into the national and international spotlight; 1995's winning director Gregor Jordan went on to direct the feature length *Two Hands* starring Heath Ledger.



STOP TERRORISM WITH YOUR PS2

Okay, so Bush got Saddam, now who's next? If you're prepared to squint and look stupid George Dubbya-style, then you'll be happy to hear that 1980s gaming giant System 3 is going to let you hunt down real life terrorists, in *America's Ten Most Wanted*. You'll be able to snuff out Bin Laden and anyone else who gets in your way when the game is released later this year.

NEW SLICE-'EM-UP

HAVE IT YOUR WAY

And sharpen up your slashing skills



HWAOROOAORAAHHHHH!

Call us weird, and it's okay because we can't hear you, but hearing the clanging swords and battle cries of raging samurai really gets a rise out of us. A samu-rise, if you will.

So as you can understand we were swinging our swords with glee when we laid eyes on Capcom's soon to be released sequel, *Way of the Samurai 2*. The first game was a thoroughly enjoyable romp through 19th century feudal Japan, and the sequel looks to take the realistic

sword slashing of the original and pack in three sword fighting styles, adding up to well over 400 types of attack!

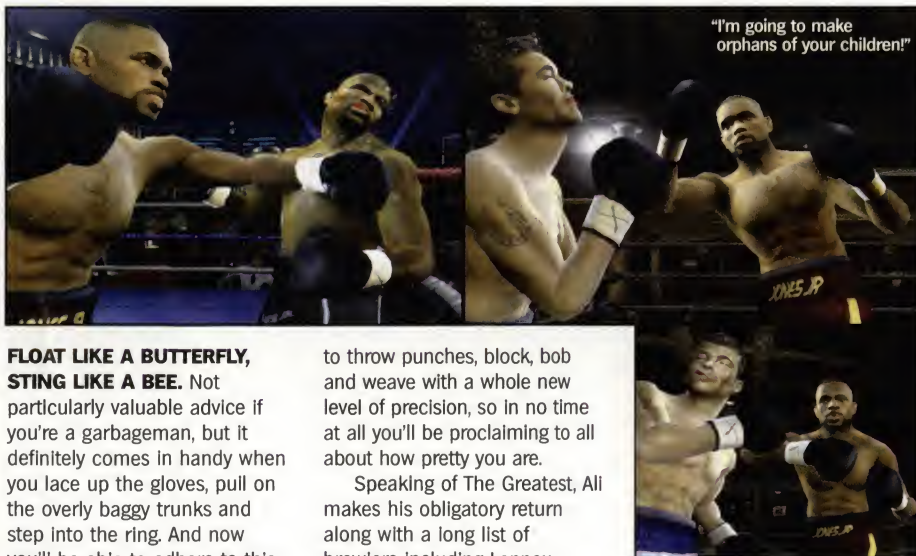
Way of the Samurai 2 also features a dynamic storyline, which will take one of four linked paths depending on the conduct of your Samurai and the way he interacts with the people around him. Can anyone say "True Crime with swords"?

We'll be sure to have our lips out of sync with our English voice over when the game wanders into town this Autumn. ♪

A GOOD CLEAN FIGHT

ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES

Just don't trip over your own shorts



FLOAT LIKE A BUTTERFLY, STING LIKE A BEE.

Not particularly valuable advice if you're a garbageman, but it definitely comes in handy when you lace up the gloves, pull on the overly baggy trunks and step into the ring. And now you'll be able to adhere to this wisdom with a considerable amount of comfort, thanks to the innovative Total Punch Control in EA's *Fight Night 2004*.

The new control method allows you to use the two thumbsticks on the Dual Shock

to throw punches, block, bob and weave with a whole new level of precision, so in no time at all you'll be proclaiming to all about how pretty you are.

Speaking of The Greatest, Ali makes his obligatory return along with a long list of brawlers including Lennox Lewis, Sugar Ray Leonard and Roy Jones Jr. – the current undisputed Light Heavyweight Champion of the world.

You can also customise your ring entrance before a match; choosing the intro music, the

people in your entourage, pyrotechnics and even which doped up celebrity will jeer at you from the front row!

Okay, so we made that last bit up. *Fight Night 2004* will be the main event this autumn. ♪



DATING GAME

Is it really all it's cracked up to be?

EVER THINK HOW COOL IT WOULD BE TO DATE A GAMER? I hate to burst your bubbles, but believe me, there WILL be problems.

Consider this: you have your PS2. Your loved one has one too. It's all very lovely, until you realise You only have one TV! Or you BOTH want to use the big TV, and nobody wants to use the little TV in the kitchen/bedroom/study.

Or, you want to sit together on the couch, but one of you wants to play *Syphon Filter* and the other wants to play *Red Faction*.

Or, you want to play something co-operative, but the only game available is [ack!] *Gauntlet Legends* (many hints to Sony, please).

Or, you go to save a new game file and discover that your precious beloved has used up all the space on your only memory card.

Okay, okay. I tell a fib. Don't believe a word I say. A fellow gamer will be the most appreciative of your finally achieving all the hidden packages in *GTA*, and won't hang about looking bored when you want to go to your local games retailer. They'll sit with you while you play, congratulate you on the complicated moves you manage to pull off, and help you pick the better of two new titles (or encourage you to buy both).

Who else will buy you the games you really want for Christmas, and then encourage you to play them instead of insisting on doing something outdoors?

So trust your instincts. While there may be the occasional tussle over who gets to use the TV (a problem that may lessen when the PSP is released) and what saves can be deleted from the memory card, you'll also find that, for the most part, you'll go together like peas and carrots. Or Jak and Daxter. ♪

MICHELLE STARR
Games Writer



RIDE LIKE THE WIND

FREE YOUR SPIRIT

By strapping it to a 1000cc Superbike



NAMCO MAY HAVE ITS BACKSIDE FIRMLY WEDGED in the motorcycle racing throne thanks to its stylish *Moto GP* series, but Capcom is set to snare the pole position and screech along on an unnecessary wheelie into the winner's circle with *Riding Spirits II*.

Plenty of the world's top bikes

including models from European manufacturers Ducati, BMW, Triumph and Aprilia will be available to ride along with Honda, Kawasaki, Yamaha, Suzuki and Japan's most famous tune shops Yoshimura and Moriwaki. With engines varying in size from 250cc to over 1000cc, *Riding Spirits II* is set to feature an impressive 330

bikes to get to grips with.

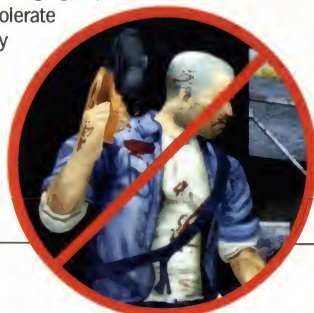
15 real circuits, a comprehensive bike customisation system and realistic sound effects that simulate the action of the bike engines right down to the individual pistons should make *Riding Spirits II* worthy of a damn good throttling when it is released in Autumn. **A**

BANNED ON THE RUN

KIWI'S TRAP MANHUNT

Rockstar's gorefest banned from sale in NZ

WHILE KIWI'S HAVE ENJOYED unedited versions of both *GTA3* and *GTA: Vice City*, ours have been edited and now, while we enjoy a totally uncensored version of Rockstar's new controversy creator *Manhunt*, gamers in NZ aren't getting it at all. In a 12 page report the NZ Office of Film and Literature Classification declared that the game was simply too gruesome for all age groups, and that it forced the player to tolerate and even enjoy killing people, which it deemed "injurious to the public good". **A**



HARRY'S BACK

ANOTHER BOUT OF HOGWARTS

Don't forget to bring some ointment

HARRY POTTER, THE CHILD MAGICIAN, is once again returning to the PS2 in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

Players will be able to switch control between both Harry and his two black arts-dabbling cronies, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. Each character has their own strengths and players must choose between them depending on the situation they find themselves in. **A**



"★★★★★ My Little Eye is an ingenious and brilliantly unsettling film"
Altitude UK

"Nothing has ever looked or sounded like this before"
Esquire UK



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- View housemate audition tapes...And More!

MY LITTLE EYE

MA 15+

ON DVD & VIDEO JANUARY 21ST



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LOADING INCOMING

PS2 RELEASE SCHEDULE



FEBRUARY

.hack Volume 1 Infection	RPG	Atari
Battlestar Galactica	Shooter	Vivendi
Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance 2	RPG	Vivendi
Carmen Sandiego	Adventure	Acclaim
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	Action	Atari
Cy Girls	Action	Atari
Dragon's Lair 3D: Special Edition	Adventure	THQ
Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	Adventure	Vivendi
Final Fantasy X-2	RPG	EA
Frogger's Adventure: The Rescue	Adventure	Atari
Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	FPS	Ubisoft
Headhunter Redemption	Action	Atari
I-Ninja	Action	Sony
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	Action	EA
Kaena	Adventure	Sony
kill.switch	Action	Sony
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Action	Atari
LMA Manager 2004	Sports	Atari
Maximo vs The Army of Zin	Adventure	THQ
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	Action	Activision
Rogue Ops	Action	THQ
Risk Global Domination	Strategy	Atari
Sonic Heroes	Platformer	Atari
Sphinx and the Shadow of Set	Platformer	THQ
Tak and the Power of Juju	Platformer	THQ
Urban Freestyle Soccer	Sports	Acclaim
Whiplash	Platformer	Atari
Wrath Unleashed	Fighting	EA

MARCH

Alias	Action	Acclaim
Champions of Norrath	RPG	Ubisoft
Deadly Skies 3	Simulation	Atari
Driver 3	Driving/action	Atari
Forbidden Siren	Survival Horror	Sony
Glass Rose	RPG	THQ
Golden Axe	Arcade	Atari
Gradius V	Shooter	Atari
Gran Turismo 4	Racing	Sony
Megaman X7	Action	THQ
MX Unleashed	Racing	THQ
Rainbow Six 3	FPS	Ubisoft
Rise to Honor	Action	Sony
Scooby-Doo! Mystery Mayhem	Adventure	THQ
Singstar	Music	Sony
SOCOM II: US Navy Seals	Action	Sony
Spawn: Armageddon	Action	EA
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	Stealth	Ubisoft
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Action	Atari
The Cat in the Hat	Adventure	Vivendi
Trivial Pursuit Unhinged	Strategy	Atari

APRIL

Dancing Stage Fever	Dancing	Atari
Firefighter FD 18	Action	Atari
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Action	Atari
MTX Mototrax	Racing	Activision
Riding Spirits II	Racing	THQ
Way of the Samurai 2	Action	THQ

PS2 RELEASE SCHEDULE



TBC IN 2004

Bloodrayne 2	Action	Atari
Blood Will Tell	Action	Sega
Call of Duty: Finest Hour	Shooter	Activision
Dark Cloud 3	RPG	Sony
Dead to Rights 2: Hell to Pay	Action	EA
Downhill Domination	Racing	Atari
Fast and the Furious	Racing	Vivendi
Fear Effect Inferno	Adventure	Atari
Final Fantasy XII	Adventure	EA
Grand Theft Auto IV: Sin City	Action	Take 2
Hitman: Contracts	Action	Atari
Killzone	Shooter	Sony
Kingdom Hearts 2	RPG	Sony
Legends of Wrestling: Showdown	Fighting	Acclaim
Metal Gear Solid 3	Action	Atari
Metallica: The Game	Action	Vivendi
Midway Arcade Treasures	Arcade	Acclaim
Moto GP 4	Racing	Sony
Nightmare Creatures 3	Action	Ubisoft
Nightshade	Action	Atari
Onimusha 3	Adventure	Capcom
Red Ninja: End of Honor	Action	Vivendi
Resident Evil Outbreak	Action	Capcom
Shrek 2: The Game	Adventure	Activision
Spider-Man 2	Action	Activision
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Action	Ubisoft
Spy Hunter 2	Action	Red Ant
Starcraft: Ghost	Action	Vivendi
Star Wars Battlefront	Action	EA
State of Emergency 2	Action	Take 2
Supercar GT	Racing	EA
Syphon Filter: Omega Strain	Action	Sony
The Getaway, Part 2	Action	Sony
The Incredibles	Action	THQ
The Movies	Simulation	Activision
The Punisher	Action	THQ
The Suffering	Action	Red Ant
The Wanderers	Action	Take 2
TimeSplitters 3	FPS	Atari
Tomb Raider VII	Adventure	Atari
Transformers Armada	Action	Atari
Ty: Bush Rescue	Platformer	EA
World's Scariest Police Chases	Action	Vivendi
X-Men: Legends	RPG	Activision



PS2 TOP 40 GAMES CHART




RANK	TITLE	CATEGORY	PUBLISHER
1	Rugby League	Sports	Tru Blu
2	Need For Speed: Underground	Racing	EA
3	Lord Of The Rings Return King	Adventure	EA
4	Cricket 2004	Sports	EA
5	EyeToy: Play	Compilation	Sony
6	Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun	Action	EA
7	GTA Twin Pack	Adventure	Take 2
8	True Crime: Streets Of LA	Adventure	Activision
9	Simpsons: Hit & Run	Adventure	Vivendi
10	WWE Smackdown! HCTP	Sports	THQ
11	GTA: Vice City	Adventure	Take 2
12	Tony Hawk's Underground	Sports	Activision
13	Dragonball Z: Budokai 2	Action	Atari
14	Manhunt	Adventure	Take 2
15	The Sims: Bustin Out	Strategy	EA
16	Ratchet & Clank 2	Adventure	Sony
17	Prince Of Persia: Sands Of Time	Adventure	Ubisoft
18	Mega 4 Pack of Games	Compilation	Acclaim
19	Crash Nitro Kart	Racing	Vivendi
20	Finding Nemo	Adventure	THQ
21	Dog's Life	Strategy	Sony
22	Jak 2: Renegade	Adventure	Sony
23	V8 Supercars + Hitman + CDS	Compilation	Atari
24	FIFA 2004	Sports	EA
25	Tiger Woods PGA 2004	Sports	EA
26	Max Payne 2	Action	Take 2
27	YuGiOh Duelist Of Roses	Strategy	Atari
28	Tomb Raider: Angel Of Darkness	Adventure	Atari
29	EyeToy: Groove	Dancing	Sony
30	NBA Live 2004	Sports	EA
31	Dancing Stage MegaMix (w Mat)	Music	Atari
32	SOCOM: US Navy SEALs	Action	Sony
33	Midnight Club 2	Racing	Take 2
34	Conflict Desert Storm 2	Action	Atari
35	Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure	Sports	Activision
36	WRC 3	Racing	Sony
37	Harry Potter Quidditch WorldCup	Sports	EA
38	NBA Jam 2004	Sports	Acclaim
39	Time Crisis 3	Action	Sony
40	Rugby 2004	Sports	EA



**Catch it on DVD and
video January 16 dude.**



 **FOR GENERAL EXHIBITION**
SOME SCENES MAY FRIGHTEN
YOUNG CHILDREN

BVA1014/30/C

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ANIMATION STUDIOS



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pre-play

PRE-PLAY CONTRIBUTORS: TRISTAN OGILVIE, ANTHONY O'CONNOR, MICHELLE STARR, MIKEY FOLEY, JAMES ELLIS, NICK O'SHEA

Previewing the new games you voted to read about!

WELCOME TO PRE-PLAY!

SO WHAT'S ALL THIS THEN? Our pledge is to keep all the big games under constant surveillance, as directed by you! Whenever a cool new game bleeps loud on your radar, write to us – we'll dig up exclusive new screens, information and interviews with the creators, or bring you first impressions from playable code.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED? To vote in our Most Wanted charts, email us on OPS2@derwenthoward.com.au and we'll also look for comments from the official forums at au.playstation.com. Get voting now!

INFO BOX It's here you'll find out who makes a game, how complete it is, when it's due to hit the stores and if there's any more information online.

INFO BURSTS Keep an eye out for these blobs, where we'll drop in facts, rants, quotations, devil's advocate opinions and anything extra you should know.



LATEST SCREENS So how's the game looking? We show the hits of the future in all their visual splendour.

OPINION BOX What do we think of it so far? We reveal our thoughts and also include what you'd like to see in the game – visit the forums at au.playstation.com to get involved.

MOST WANTED

Which upcoming games do you want to see more of? Email or write to us and we'll uncover the latest details on your future favourites!

POSITION	GAME	WHAT?
1	CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR Just when you thought the war was over... it's only just begun	PREVIEW PAGE 20 EXCLUSIVE!
2	DOWNHILL DOMINATION OPS2 loves mountain bikes and mountain women ...	HANDS-ON PAGE 22 EXCLUSIVE!
3	TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU Jumping on platforms is back in style ...	HANDS-ON PAGE 23 EXCLUSIVE!
4	MTX: MOTOTRAX Load up the suspension and get ready to ride that next turn hard!	NEW SCREENS PAGE 24 EXCLUSIVE!
5	SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON Spawn may Cry, but we don't think it'll be any time soon	HANDS-ON PAGE 25 EXCLUSIVE!

ALSO IN pre-play THIS MONTH

SPY HUNTER 2PAGE 26
FIREFIGHTER F.D. 18PAGE 28



Which forthcoming games would you like to see in Pre-Play next month? Visit the forums at au.playstation.com, email us at OPS2@derwenthoward.com.au (remember to put 'Pre-Play' in the subject line) or write by post to Pre-Play, Official PlayStation 2 Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 2002. Vote now!

PREVIEW

CALL-DUTY

NAME *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*
 PUBLISHER Activision
 DEVELOPER Spark Unlimited
 WEBSITE www.callofduty.com
 LAST SEEN First look

PERCENTAGE
COMPLETE

40%

RELEASE
DATE
MID 2004

CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR

Just when you thought the war was over... it's only just begun

IN A MASTERFUL COUP EARLIER LAST YEAR,

Activision managed to pry the development group Spark Unlimited from their previous home at EA. With the entire *Medal of Honor* series to their credit, Spark Unlimited's liberation from the publishing giant came as a surprise to everyone – perhaps EA believed that the public's honeymoon with the World War II genre was drawing to a close. Keeping to what it knows best, Spark Unlimited is looking to prove its previous platoon wrong by dishing out another blockbusting game set amidst the second World War.

WHAT SETS CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR APART

from the competition is that it tells the story of the war, rather than that of a particular character. By relaying the tales of the challenges faced by the Allied forces across the world, Spark Unlimited has managed to capture the human side of the conflict. Whether your assignment is liberating POWs from a concentration camp in occupied France or battling against the entrenched Nazi forces on the Russian front in Stalingrad, the intense skirmishes and the camaraderie between your fellow troops makes for a particularly impactful experience, without breaking up the action.

SPEAKING OF INTENSE, COD BRINGS A WHOLE NEW

meaning to the term. Due to some tidy programming, you're often fighting alongside around a dozen Allied soldiers, with about the same number of Axis soldiers to contend with. To compliment the size of the forces, each computer-controlled soldier sports some of the

best AI seen in a first person shooter yet. Friend and foe alike actively seek cover, and only pop up to fire off a few shots. If the situation changes, like enemy advancement or encountering superior firepower, troops will reposition to counteract the enemy's efforts.

JUST AS YOUR NUMEROUS ENEMIES CAN MOVE

with a purpose, they've got deadly aim to boot. Luckily, you can crouch or go completely prone to present a smaller target for incoming fire. If you manage to live long enough to turn the guns on the enemy, between being blinded by the muzzle flash and deafened by the high-calibre roar, you'll find out that aiming at specific targets isn't exactly a cakewalk. Fans of the *Medal of Honor* series would do well to do some reconnaissance on *COD: FH* – when it invades local PS2s later in the year, we'll all be taken prisoner by its compelling gameplay. **A- NO**

opinion

PlayStation 2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE AUSTRALIA

CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR is backed by a lot of the experienced talent behind the previous *Medal of Honor* games – and that's got to be a good thing. Keep your sights trained on this one. It's sure to be a direct hit.



HOT OR NOT?

TEPID

WARM

HOT

BOILING

MELTDOWN

ON THE FRONT LINE

After some top secret espionage operations, OPS2 operatives managed to infiltrate Spark Unlimited's Santa Monica headquarters in California, and capture Scott Langteau, COO and Producer for interrogation.



OPS2: How is the conversion from the PC progressing? Are there any improvements or sacrifices that have been encountered in the process?

SL: Actually, *Call of Duty: Finest Hour* is a completely new game created from the ground up here at Spark Unlimited. *Call of Duty: Finest Hour* has been designed around completely different player characters and campaigns meant to deliver the most compelling and intense action ever with one notable exception – both games include levels of gameplay that focus on the epic battle of Stalingrad. Beyond that crossover, gamers can look forward to an entirely new *Call of Duty* experience.

OPS2: Will the game support any PS2 online options?

SL: We're very excited about the great multiplayer features in *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*, however, as the game is still fairly early in development, we'll be prepared to announce more details as to these types of features sometime in the near future.

OPS2: What are the main differences fans of *Medal of Honor: Frontline* can expect to see in *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*?

SL: *Call of Duty: Finest Hour* focuses attention on the largely overlooked fact that people from all walks of life, and a great number of nationalities fought side-by-side as part of the Allies in WWII, and allows gamers to stand in their shoes. That's one of the major points that *Finest Hour* conveys; that no one man won the war. It took a variety of people, with a variety of abilities, who were fighting for a variety of reasons. Couple this with a variety of Allied vehicles to control and command, and enemy vehicles with which to contend, and you've got a new level of diversity between *Finest Hour* and the competition.



Hey – the game's only 40% complete, folks. The enemies in this level haven't even been born yet!



Stalingrad – no, it's not someone who graduates from Stalin University. Idiot



WE WILL FIGHT THEM ON THE BEACHES

To add to the authenticity, loading screens feature intelligence documents, communist propaganda posters and quotes from historical figures like Grant, Patton, Stalin and Churchill, so before you're finished reading, you're back in the action.

"Don't just stand there kissing your rifles – fire!"



Things are a little too quiet ...



HANDS-ON



NAME Downhill Domination
PUBLISHER Atari
DEVELOPER Incog Inc. Entertainment
WEBSITE www.us.playstation/games/scus-97177.com
LAST SEEN OPS2#22

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

80%

RELEASE DATE
MAY 2004



Meanwhile, on the set of *BMX Bandits 2: Grip My Handlebar...*



Just another leisurely ride through the mountains ...

DOWNHILL DOMINATION

OPS2 loves mountain bikes and mountain women ...

DOWNHILL DOMINATION IS NOT PARTICULARLY

original; it basically seats *Road Rash* and *SSX* clumsily on a tandem bicycle and sends them hurtling uncontrollably down the steepest of slopes and longest of vertical drops. It is however, as you would presume, a heck of a lot of fun; peddling like crazy down inclines, pulling ridiculously extreme tricks off jumps and smashing an elbow into the nose of anyone who even considers overtaking you.

THE FIRST THING THAT WILL IMPRESS YOU ABOUT

the game is the sheer size of the courses. Looking down from the summit before the start of a race you'll see the track twisting and turning off into the distance far beyond your field of vision. Every one of the 27 courses has multiple paths and shortcuts, each consisting of various vertigo-inducing drops, winding tunnels and big-air jumps.

THERE'S ALSO A NUMBER OF POWER-UPS TO

collect on your way down; from basic health and turbo-boosts to the more sought after combat upgrades. At the beginning of each race you'll only be able to punch; but by collecting the combat upgrades you'll be able to kick opponents into rocks and other obstacles, hurl glass bottles at whoever's in the lead and crack skulls with sticks – all in the competitive spirit of racing. Another upgrade even allows you to swing the back of your bike out; tail-whipping other riders clean out of the saddle.

WHAT TAKES ALL THESE ELEMENTS AND FORCES

them to be an enjoyable ride is the sense of speed the game delivers, and the inherent sense of danger it brings with it. You'll ride scarily close to the edge of bottomless ravines and at times you'll be going so fast that you'll realise far too late that what looked like a jump was actually a large rock. Ouch. **TO**



Suddenly E.T. passed out, and Elliott, Michael and little Gertie plummeted to their deaths



"Hey! Stop checking out my ass!"



WILDLIFE Wipeout

There's not only other riders to contend with, each track has its own native fauna. They'll either slow you down when you hit them like rabbits, or chase after you and knock you off like the mountain goats.



The Tour de France gets tougher every year



opinion

PlayStation 2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE - AUSTRALIA

DOWNHILL DOMINATION may lack originality, but its large number of modes, the size of its courses and the pure playability should make it a worthy competitor to the likes of *SSX*.



HOT OR NOT?

TEPID WARM **HOT** BOILING MELTDOWN



pre-play

HANDS-ON



NAME Tak and the Power of Juju
PUBLISHER THQ
DEVELOPER Avalanche
WEBSITE www.thq.com
LAST SEEN OPS2#16

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

95%

RELEASE DATE MARCH



Tak. It's kinda like Jak. Except Jak is awesome



Riding Rhinos - that's original... (cough, Donkey Kong Country, cough).



TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU

Jak II? Ratchet & Clank 2? Jumping on platforms is back in style ...

WITH JAK II AND RATCHET AND CLANK 2 GRABBING the world of platforming by the balls and yanking it to all new highs, is there any room for pretenders to their crown? Hell yeah. We'd still be downing pills and legging it from ghosts if someone hadn't thought they could do it better than the Pac-Man himself? So here at OPS2 we like to champion the little man who's not afraid to take on the PS2 behemoths at their own game. And they don't come much littler than Tak.

IN A COLLABORATION BETWEEN KIDS CHANNEL

Nickelodeon and THQ they've come up with an admittedly nipper-friendly adventure that's not without some rather bright humour. Thankfully the younger gamer angle hasn't resulted in a twee, saccharine cutesyness that makes you want to vomit all over your joypad. Instead the game is replete with clever ideas that should have kids enthralled and older gamers struggling to hold back that appreciative grin.

THE PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION IS APPARENT

right from the off with decent voice acting and some very pleasant visuals as Tak's plight unfolds before us. With most of his village being turned into sheep over

night it's up to the little fella to battle his way through level after level of mammoth leaps, evil creatures and cunning tests to put things right again. Or he could just send them all to the big city to live in harmony with all those other suit-wearing sheep.

THE BIGGEST NOVELTY IN THIS GAME IS TAK'S

Interaction with the animals that inhabit each area. For instance, Orangutangs can be used to pull trees to the ground, let you grab on and then let them go to spring upright and launch you off to previously inaccessible areas. Pretty neat, eh? **MF**

opinion

PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE - AUSTRALIA

TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU has techniques to master, weapons to wield, bosses to encounter, pretty graphics and all of the other platform staples, but it's all just a little too safe at the moment.

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID	WARM	HOT	BOILING	MELTDOWN
-------	------	-----	---------	----------

The chicken suit: probably not a good idea to wear to a funeral. Damn hindsight...



PLAY GOD

The village shaman sees you, the player, as some sort of magical God that he has managed to conjure up. Talking to you through the screen he wonders why you're holding a mysterious black thing in your hands and then asks you to assist Tak on his adventures.



The Vines - not just an overrated rock band

NEW SCREENS & INFO



NAME MTX: Motocross
PUBLISHER Activision
DEVELOPER Left Field
WEBSITE www.activision.com
LAST SEEN OPS2#16

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

70%

RELEASE DATE
APRIL 2004

"Motocross? I'll be Motofurious if I don't win!"



The Superman: just one of many tricks you can pull off

DANGER MONEY

After each race in the game's main Career mode you'll be shown a tally of the cash you've just earned. Obviously you'll earn a stadium full of dollars if you get first place but you can also earn cash from sponsors by performing tricks mid-race. The more dangerous tricks you do, the more cash you earn. You'll have to weigh it all up though, as stuffing up will often see you fall behind and in MTX, and it's not easy to catch up.



The game is ridiculously fast ... not that you can tell from these static screens



MTX: MOTOCROSS

Load up the suspension and get ready to ride that next turn hard!

TONY HAWK IS ALL GOOD AND WELL, BUT THERE'S

nothing quite like hopping on a screaming two-wheeler and pulling off death-teasing stunts while getting splattered with enough mud to make your mother scream "Naplan!" Subsequently Activision, the gurus of all things extreme, has decided to cook up MTX: Motocross for the filth-loving PS2 hordes.

AT THIS POINT THE GAME IS DISPLAYING SOME

welcome Hawk-isms. When starting Career mode, for instance, you'll be set loose around bike dude Travis Pastrana's farmhouse to practice your racing, jumps, wheelies and stunts. You can ride up to various people scattered around the place and take on their challenge whenever you please – rather than being given an unyielding itinerary. After you get comfortable with your riding ability it's off to the races. Winning events earns cash and as always, cash is good. Disappointingly the preview version didn't allow you to win the affection of the tarty female spectators – maybe in the final version.

IN ANY CASE MTX IS A FUN GAME TO PLAY. THE

racing engine, for instance, is as tight as a bar wench's tank top, allowing for totally believable bike behaviour that leans towards the enjoyable arcade style of play. Taking the arcade aspect of the game

further you can also load up your bike's suspension to achieve greater trick-pulling height when racing the courses. This works an absolute treat and with all the scores of jumps and ramps littered throughout each of the tracks, it's the big reason why players will keep coming back for more.

IT ALSO DOESN'T HURT THAT THE GAME LOOKS

as good as a chicken kebab after a big night on the ale. The bikes, riders and tracks are nice and sharp, and overall, the game runs pretty smoothly. Considering that MTX is packing in some seductive multiplayer options, including the possibility of online racing, we're predicting it will be crowned king of the muddy hill come release. **JE**

opinion PlayStation 2

MTX MOTOCROSS looks like a sure thing. So long as they tweak the AI to make it a bit more unrelenting and include online play, MTX should easily earn the cash of dirt bike fans.



HOT OR NOT?

TEPID WARM HOT BOILING MELTDOWN





pre-play

HANDS-ON

SPAWN ARMAGEDDON

NAME: Spawn: Armageddon
PUBLISHER: Namco
DEVELOPER: Point of View
WEBSITE: www.spawnarmageddon.com
LAST SEEN: OPS2#16

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: **80%**

RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2004



SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON

Spawn may Cry, but we don't think it'll be any time soon

LIFE'S BEEN A ROUGH OLD TROT FOR AL

Simmons aka: Spawn. First he gets killed due to some nefarious government conspiracy. Then, when in Hell, he decides to make a deal with the devil. He is reborn as Spawn, then changes his mind about being Satan's bitch and instead skulks around the shadows righting wrongs and looking mean while he does it. As if this isn't enough to put a rat in his pants, the war between Angels and Devils has finally gone from cold to hot and it's taking place in New York – right where Spawn hangs his tatty red cape. Oh and there's some new super soldier doing the rounds. All in all there's going to be Hell to pay.

SPAWN IS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL

comic book creations of all time. It also has the dubious honour of inspiring a woeful movie and a couple of even more dire games. Namco has decided that enough is enough and this time Spawn has to be done right! The action takes place in a gritty looking New York and takes the form of a third person action game. To say this was "Inspired" by Devil May Cry is a massive understatement. From what we've seen so far Spawn is basically DMC with the MacFarlane comic creation cut and pasted over the top. This

is not necessarily a bad thing as there are many DMC fans out there braying for more, but it should be noted.

SPAWN CAN ATTACK HIS DEMONIC FOES USING

his guns, an axe, weird glowing green goo and his iconic chains. His enemies – mostly demons – let loose by the angel's carpet bombing of Hell, explode satisfactorily to heavy metal music and are called things like "Meat puppets". Graphically things aren't all that spectacular at the moment. There are some issues with originality and the slow-witted camera but hopefully at the time of release Spawn's huge potential will finally be realised ... or else. **AO**

opinion **PlayStation 2**
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-AUSTRALIA

SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON'S graphics are a little bland and it's a huge DMC rip-off. However, it's still a way off and a lot can happen in that time. We're cautiously keeping the faith in this Hellish hack fest.

HOT OR NOT?

TEPID WARM **HOT** BOILING MELTDOWN



HANDS-ON

SPY HUNTER 2

NAME Spy Hunter 2
PUBLISHER Red Ant
DEVELOPER Midway
WEBSITE www.midway.com
LAST SEEN OPS2#16

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

70%

RELEASE DATE
MARCH 2004



SPY HUNTER 2

Transforming cars, rocket-wielding motorbikes – has this game got it all?

WHILE WE ALL KNOW THAT MOST OF US WILL

only ever have a Toyota Corolla parked in our driveways, it's still likely we'll continue to yearn for a car that can generate unbridled envy from the four ends of our suburbs. For a car that is, well, Bond-ish – James Bond-ish. To be honest, we here at OPS2 don't see side-mounted cluster missiles coming standard on Corollas just yet – but there is good news. It seems Midway has teamed up with Angel Studios to deliver a sequel to *Spy Hunter*, its frenzied car-based shoot'em-up, in a bid to satisfy our carnal war-mobile cravings.

SPY HUNTER 2 IS, IN MANY WAYS, PRETTY SIMILAR

to the original. You take on various car-based espionage missions with an ever-expanding utility belt of nasty projectiles to take out enemies ahead of you and boobytraps that are useful for foes to your rear. Your swish car transforms into a bike after taking too much damage, and into a speedboat when landing on water.

THERE ARE A FEW THINGS THAT HAVE CHANGED

with this sequel, though. Firstly, the car handling is much tighter, so you'll be able to turn on a dime and poke thousands of lead nuggets into an incoming enemy on nothing more than a whim. Secondly, the game is tougher, featuring some mercilessly long levels that force you to start over if your set of mega-wheels combusts into charred oblivion. Oh, and 'the car' is looking a lot swankier this time around, featuring a smoother, more refined look that makes the original car model look like it was hammered together by your poor-sighted uncle Marv.

IF YOU ENJOYED THE EXPLOITS OF THE ORIGINAL

then hang tough for our upcoming review to see if this sequel drives the extra mile. **JE**



Sure, it's got machine gun turrets, but does it have a cup-holder? We can only wonder ...

SPY ACTION FOR TWO

Spy Hunter 2 comes packed with two multiplayer modes for a couple of friends to play through: Multiplayer Campaign and Spy Hunt. The first is a co-op variation of the main single-player game except the second player controls the turret at the back of the car, meaning they fire the homing torpedoes and launch the rear attacks. *Spy Hunt* is a player-vs-player death-match affair set in a number of differently themed arenas where the last one left on wheels wins.



opinion

PlayStation 2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE - AUSTRALIA

SPY HUNTER 2'S ace up the sleeve is definitely its speed-plus-action concept. Provided some of the level design and missions are spruced up it should make for some solid arcade gaming.



HOT OR NOT?

TEPID WARM HOT BOILING MELTDOWN

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*The Government will protect you.
The Government will defeat our enemies.
The Government is your friend.*

...OR DO YOU WANT THE TRUTH?

Jade's world is under attack from an alien force. Her government claims to be defending the people, yet more and more of them are becoming enslaved. Fighting oppression, propaganda and deception, not to mention fighting those intent on killing her, Jade's journalistic quest is to unravel the truth and expose the conspiracy. What lies beyond good and evil? You are about to find out...



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HANDS-ON

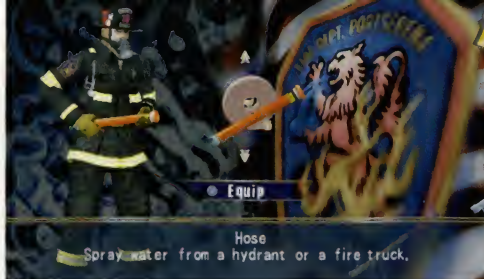


NAME	Firefighter F.D.18
PUBLISHER	Atari
DEVELOPER	Konami
WEBSITE	www.konami.com/firefighter
LAST SEEN	OPS2#22

PERCENTAGE
COMPLETE

90

RELEASE
DATE
APRIL 2004



"Stand back, boys, I can't hold my hose any longer!"



FIREFIGHTER F.D.18

It's like a Disco Inferno – minus the boob tubes ...

WELL, IT MUST BE SAID - KONAMI HAS CERTAINLY won the crown for the most unique game premise of the year. And yes, it is exactly what it sounds like. You are a firefighter (gasp!), and you will be putting out fires. Funny that.

THERE IS MORE TO IT, HOWEVER, THAN RUNNING
around with a big hose. As Dean McGregor, your primary objective (to start, anyway) is to rescue people trapped in blazes. Putting the fire out is secondary – you get points for doing so but if a person kicks the bucket ...Well, it's game over time for you, bub.

IT SOON TRANSPIRES, THOUGH, THAT THERE IS A method to the madness of blazes that are running rife through the city. A dastardly conspiracy is afoot, and Dean, armed with his trusty hose, axe and fire extinguishers (not to mention bably news reporter Emille Arquette) sets about the uncover the mastermind behind the mayhem.

THE GAME PLAYS RATHER LIKE METAL GEAR SOLID – If Solid Snake were to zip around rescuing people instead of shooting them when their backs are turned. Almost every element of the game is an echo of *Metal Gear* – from the basic gameplay to the radar on the top right hand corner of your screen.

AND WE CAN'T FORGET THE VISUALS. WITH

something as ephemeral as fire playing such a major role in the game, you'd expect something pretty spectacular in the graphics department, right? You'd get it, too. Combine this with Dolby Pro-Logic sound, and the fire leaps out at you off the screen, making your battle with the element seem much more real.

WHEN ALL'S SAID AND DONE, KONAMI HAS TAKEN what could've been a dull-as-sand premise and turned it into an amazing, heart-thumping experience. Not only do you have to face very realistic dangers such as chemical explosions, backdrafts and slippery oil spills, but you have to unravel a dark mystery that threatens your entire city. **D MS**




opinion

PlayStation 2

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE - AUSTRALIA

FIREFIGHTER F.D.18 could be one of the 'hottest' games of 2004. It seems that Konami is banking on fans wanting more than random acts of violence ... and its gamble might just pay off.



HOT OR NOT?

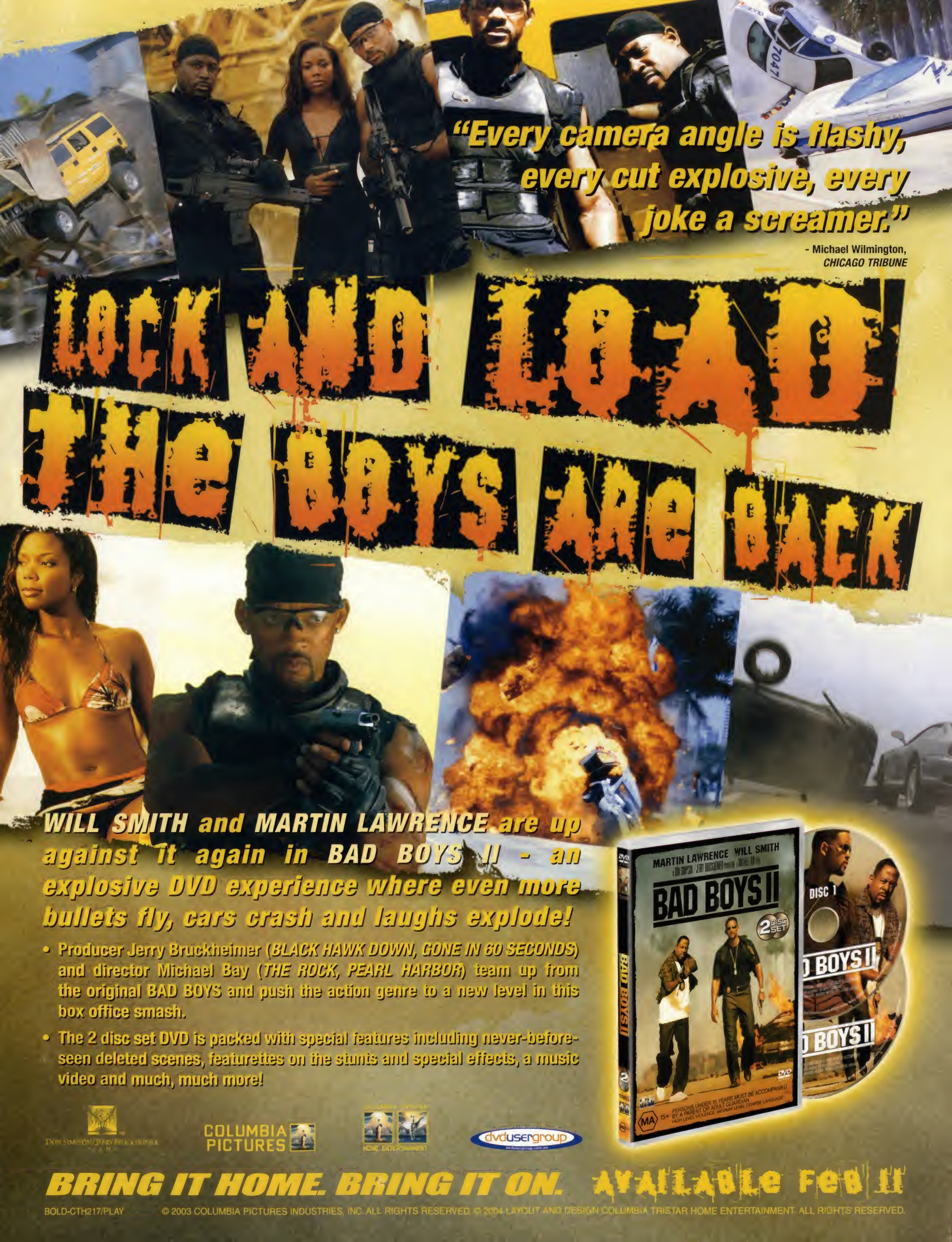
TEPID

WARM

HOT

BOILING

MELTDOWN



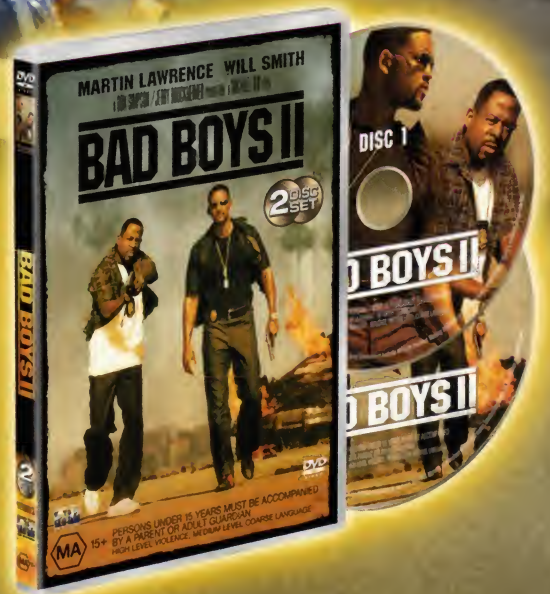
**"Every camera angle is flashy,
every cut explosive, every
joke a screamer."**

- Michael Wilmington,
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

LOCK AND LOAD THE BOYS ARE BACK

**WILL SMITH and MARTIN LAWRENCE are up
against It again in BAD BOYS II - an
explosive DVD experience where even more
bullets fly, cars crash and laughs explode!**


- Producer Jerry Bruckheimer (*BLACK HAWK DOWN*, *GONE IN 60 SECONDS*) and director Michael Bay (*THE ROCK*, *PEARL HARBOR*) team up from the original *BAD BOYS* and push the action genre to a new level in this box office smash.
- The 2 disc set DVD is packed with special features including never-before-seen deleted scenes, featurettes on the stunts and special effects, a music video and much, much more!



BRING IT HOME. BRING IT ON. AVAILABLE FEB 11

THE BEST OF THE BEST

**OPS2 gives you the lowdown
on what to start saving for ...**

 In the rapidly evolving world of console videogames, each year seems to be better than the last. With every advancement made in hardware and programming techniques, the public expectation is raised a notch, and distinguishing the great games from the good is constantly getting harder and harder.

With this in mind, the PS2 is set to drag you by the Dual Shocks into videogame heaven in 2004. Over the following pages, we show you the games that will help get you there. From the stunning realism of the long-anticipated *Gran Turismo 4* to the intense galactic battlefield action of *Star Wars: Battlefront*, 2004 is certainly looking to be the biggest and best year for the PlayStation 2 so far. It also looks to be the year that many of the big names make a triumphant and welcome return; Solid Snake, Sam Fisher, Spider-Man and Lara are all coming back. But there's also some fresh faces, such as *Starcraft Ghost* and the game that is set to redefine the first-person shooter genre, *Killzone*.

Want to know more? Read on ...



SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

Publisher: Sony **Developer:** Sony Computer Entertainment America **Release:** TBC 2004

AFTER THREE GAMES FOR THE PSone, it seems that the Syphon Filter virus is finally set to infect the PS2. It looks suspiciously like the game's undergone quite a few mutations, too ...

There are so many jaw-dropping enhancements that it's hard to give any one feature top billing. Probably the feature that has introduced the greatest change is the new online component – hooray for the Network Adaptor! If you can saddle up three of your mates, you can play co-operative missions.

This sadly also means that good ol' Gabe Logan is no longer a playable character. Instead, you get to create your own battle-hardened dude or

dudette, with options for just about every part of your body, including head, hair, clothing, tattoos and awards.

The gameplay mechanics are pretty similar to those in the previous games. The story, however, is vastly different. The Syphon Filter virus has gotten out of hand, and Gabe Logan has created an agency to help keep the world in order. You will play one of the soldiers of this new faction, and it will be your job to keep the peace and keep people alive.

With an entire artillery waiting to be unlocked, online multiplayer action and a new ranking system, *Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain* looks likely to be a lot more fun than the ebola virus.



The Omega Strain – it's not the stress of boarding at a fraternity house



Online co-op mode should prove to be a huge hit

BEST CO-OP GAME

GRAN TURISMO 4

Publisher: Sony **Developer:** Polyphony Digital **Release:** March



GT4 LOOKS SET TO REIGN over GT3 in all areas. It's set to include around 500 cars, a new selection of tracks, including real international raceways decked out with high-detail textures that will turn heads like a hitch-hiking centrefold. In terms of game modes, GT4 will allow online racing for up to six



Thought GT3 was pretty? Prepare to be stunned



We're really starting to rev our engines over this baby



racers – though voice communication has not been confirmed.

Apart from being fooled into thinking you're driving on a real track thanks to the gorgeous visuals, the game's handling has been tightened too. If players are struggling with the often unrelenting realism of the game's

handling then they can enable a couple of options; ASM (Assisted Stability Management) which gives your cars some added grip, and TCS (Traction Control System) which helps with traction when going over varied terrain.

If you have any interest in this sure-to-be-masterpiece – stay tuned.

BEST RACING SIM

STARCRRAFT GHOST

Publisher: Vivendi **Developer:** Nihilistic **Release:** TBC 2004



Don't let the smile fool you – it doesn't want to be your friend

LET'S CLEAR THIS UP FROM THE start. This is not a real-time strategy game. In spite of *Starcraft* being one of the most popular strategy games in the world – it's practically a national sport in Korea – Blizzard has decided to make its franchise more like *Red Faction* and less like futuristic chess.

Starcraft Ghost will feature some of the highest enemy intelligence yet, with guards responding to the merest sounds you mistakenly make and calling for backup before wading in to remove your limbs from your body.

Thankfully you're equipped with

some very tasty powers, including the ability to adopt a stealth mode, speed about like an Olympic sprinter or slow things down *Max Payne*-style.

In the different races that you'll come up against you'll have to use your noggin to make clever battle choices. The Protoss for instance, have telepathic powers which totally negate your stealth abilities. Time to re-think your whole approach and take 'em on from a completely different angle. This is looking very much like a shooter with brains, and is packed with very delicious visuals indeed.

BEST SCI-FI GAME



SOCOM II: US NAVY SEALS

Publisher: Sony **Developer:** Zipper Interactive **Release:** March



The fares were cheap, but Virgin Blue's flight paths were often risky



Machine gun nests now litter the maps



AFTER THE RESOUNDING SUCCESS OF THE FIRST SOCOM GAME, it was natural for Zipper Interactive to return to the drawing board and see how it could improve on the previous game. Its extensive effort is obvious, with the visuals of the game receiving a notable shot in the arm and the use of new lighting effects in particular adding to the eye candy.

NEW WEAPONS ARE AT THE EXPLOSIVE END OF THE SCALE

The single player game boasts a dozen new missions, from the roving countryside of Algeria to the sprawling slums of Brazil. Teammate and enemy AI have been considerably tuned, so you'll need to be particularly cautious when approaching entrenched positions, as going gung ho will just get you sent home in a pine box this time.

The online multiplayer facet now includes all the maps from the last instalment, as well as a host of new levels, making for a broad range of environments to

engage in. Maps now sport strategically placed machine gun nests, which are excellent for laying down suppressive fire. Some structures are destructible, so blowing up certain bridges can change the flow of gameplay significantly, and force your opponent to rethink their battle plans.

The weapon arsenal has been expanded significantly, with a range of new rifles and shotguns added, yet the most significant new weapons are at the explosive end of the scale. The grenade launchers from the single player game are now available in multiplayer, and can fire either smoke or explosive rounds. Rocket launchers make their debut, and can deliver a fiery death to anyone within line of sight.

A couple of new modes of play have been introduced to the fray. Breach mode has two types of play. The first is identical to the Demolition mode you're already familiar with – each team has a base that can be destroyed for victory by the single bomb that spawns in the middle of the map. The second

Breach game has one team defending a single base for as long as they can, and then the teams swap roles at the end of the round. Escort mode brings some significant changes to the previous Hostage mode. Instead of having to find and rescue civilians, you actually start with the innocents in tow and have to get them to one of two departure areas. This generally involves walking into a terrorist ambush near the extraction point, so you have to be very wary at every turn.

Fans of the last SOCOM game will no doubt have the sequel on their 'to buy' list already, and anyone that is searching for a game with a polished single and multiplayer aspects should start counting the sleeps too.



WE HAVE BUSH

While lurking in the long grass and low brush was a great stealth tactic in the original SOCOM, it's not quite as effective this time around. Foliage parts realistically around you as you move through it so for the more eagle-eyed troops. It's just a case of lobbing grenades into the moving bushes to give the sneaky bastards a fatal surprise.



"I know this probably isn't the right time, Sarge, but... I'm pregnant!"

SPIDER-MAN 2

BEST
COMIC
GAME

Publisher: Activision **Developer:** Treyarch **Release:** Winter



He's got more Spidey sense than dollars

ATTENTION TRUE BELIEVERS. Shut your traps and point your peepers this way. While the PS2's first game starring the web-headed one may have left you feeling like a funnel-web had just taken a chomp out of your rump, Activision is promising that the sequel, based on the second *Spider-Man* film, will swing onto the system and make amends.

As we've stated before, the game is no longer divided into linear missions but is instead set in a sprawling full-scale Manhattan. Like metrosexuality, bottled water and reality home renovation programs, it seems this sort of GTA-styled level design is the new pink.

Other new additions to the sequel

include being able to charge up a jump meter that allows you to leap from the ground directly into the air to avoid danger, or help you swing off to save another mace-less damsel. There will also be a counter-move button that can be called upon when Spidey's spider sense signals that danger is incoming.

To encourage players to undertake the random street quests, hero and style points will be able to be earned by solving sundry crimes and performing smooth acrobatics respectively. Using these points you'll be able to purchase move upgrades and new abilities.

Spider-Man 2 will swing into action around the time of the new film's release.

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

Publisher: Atari **Developer:** Konami **Release:** TBC 2004

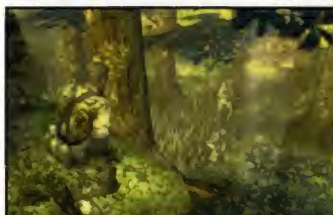
THE TITLE MAY BE A BIT DUBIOUS, but you can be pretty confident that Hideo Kojima and his team are hard at work producing what could be Solid Snake's most engrossing mission yet. If indeed, it is Solid Snake ...

It seems that following *MGS2: Sons of Liberty* Konami is looking to go back to the roots of the series; to simplify the core mechanics rather than complicating things. With any luck the apparent focus on basic instincts and survival will mean reducing the amount of dizzying conspiracy theories and rambling CODEC conversations that plagued the previous game.

Details remain scarce on the plot of the game, other than that the action takes place in a jungle setting and, according to Kojima-san, is set in the 1960s. Given the era that the game takes place in, there's speculation that the game's main character isn't Solid Snake but in fact his father Big Boss, or indeed

someone else entirely ...

What is known about the gameplay is that there'll be a strong focus on survival; not only will you have to outwit and overcome the human enemies, but hunt your own food and mend injuries such as broken bones with makeshift splints.



We'll all be eating snake by the end of this year. Damn you Queer Eye ...



"What's that digging into my back?"
"Er, it's my belt buckle. I swear"

BEST
ACTION
GAME

V8 SUPERCARS RACE DRIVER 2

Publisher: Atari **Developer:** Codemasters **Release:** Spring

CONTRARY TO SOME UNFOUNDED rumours going around at the moment, we can confirm to you that *V8 Supercar Race Driver 2* is definitely on its way for the PS2. We can also confirm its superior in every way to the original ...

There are many new additions to the sequel. Most notably, the entire game will feature 58 tracks and about twice the number of cars (including new and old Mustangs and a 12L V8 Landrover, trucks, hotrods and F1-based open-wheelers). And in addressing the criticism from the original that there wasn't enough focus on the V8 Supercar series, Codemasters has assured us that the

"You get the lot for less!"



game will feature a far greater focus on our biggest race series and has included some notable tracks that were missing in the original.

At the time of going to print, the team could not confirm to us that Mark Skaffe's HRT team was included but were "very confident and close" to

closing the deal so that gamers and race fans will be able to choose the Red Devils team.

The entire game, physics and damage engine has now been overhauled and car performances will be more greatly affected. Look out for an exclusive feature in coming months.

BEST
MUSCLE
CARS

Codemasters has certainly studied up on the V8 series



SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW



Sam can now shimmy upwards while wedged between two walls

BEST STEALTH SIM

Publisher: Ubisoft **Developer:** Ubisoft Shanghai **Release:** March

SAM FISCHER'S NEXT ADVENTURE In espionage is looking as good as a set of Venezuelan triplets in a Jacuzzi. As usual, the objective based escapades are staged throughout various international locales, including a train mission in France and some jungle stalking in South-East Asia. In true NSA style Ubisoft has so far remained relatively tight-lipped on *Pandora Tomorrow*, though a few key nuggets of information have surfaced. First-off and most excitingly, *PT* is said to be a much less linear experience than the original. *OPS2* has always thought that combining the shadow clinging, tongue-

stuttering intensity of the original game with, say, some of the freedom found in the brilliant *Deus Ex*, would yield a truly classic and original game. The good news is that Ubisoft has listened. Now there will be up to four different ways to accomplish an objective or get to a particular point, upping both the replay value and the level of environmental immersion. Additionally, when you are spotted, enemies will no longer always run and trigger an alarm. Instead they'll become more aggressive and run off and grab some heavier weaponry to wipe you out with.

Of course, it's the online

multiplayer mode that's got most gamers jittering to each other like grannies at a bus stop. The latest word is that the deathmatch mode can accommodate up to four players, splitting them into two teams consisting of Infiltrators and Mercenaries. But here's the kick – while the infiltrators are decked out with all the standard SC spy gear and play using a third-person perspective, the Mercenaries play use a first-person view and rely on superior firearms and gun-mounted torches. We can't wait.

DRIVER 3

Publisher: Atari **Developer:** Reflections **Release:** March

TRUCKS? CHECK. BOATS? CHECK. MOTORBIKES? CHECK. Yes, it certainly seems that developer Reflections is giving fans all kinds of new ways to get around in the hotly anticipated sequel, *Driv3r*.

Ignoring the inevitable comparisons with the *GTA* series, the team at Reflections has made a concerted effort to ensure the new game stays true to the main focus of the series' roots; to provide the most cinematic car chases ever experienced this side of a Hollywood movie set.

And you'll certainly have plenty of 'avenues' for vehicle-based thrills and spills; *Driv3r* consists of sprawling

environments based on real-world cities Miami, Nice and Istanbul, each packed with various back alleys, secret jumps and short-cuts. In order to make the hot pursuits feel and handle in a realistic manner, extra attention has been paid to the physics engine and damage models. Each individual panel of your vehicle will have its own "real properties", meaning that scratches, dents and bullet holes will be accurately modelled.

And did we mention there's an arsenal of weaponry such as pistols, machine guns, shotguns, an M16 and a grenade launcher that will all be at main character Tanner's disposal?

Photorealism – much nicer than crude sketch realism



BEST CAR CHASES



FINAL FANTASY XII

Publisher: TBC **Developer:** Square Enix **Release:** Late 2004



BEST RPG

WHILE WE HAVE BEEN PATIENTLY WAITING FOR FINAL FANTASY XI, Square Enix has announced that it is in development of *Final Fantasy XII*. So, the question we ask ourselves is, is Square finally becoming little more than a *Final Fantasy* factory?

In case you hadn't heard yet, the

newest member of the *Final Fantasy* family is set in Ivalice – the same world as *Final Fantasy Tactics: Advance* and *Final Fantasy Tactics*. So yes, there will be Bangaa, and Viera, and what we've all been waiting for many years: playable Moogles. Since the game takes place in another area and time in Ivalice, there

will be plenty of other new races too.

The story is nothing out of the ordinary. Ashe spends her days just princessing about when her kingdom is taken by a neighbouring Empire. Well, of course Ashe swears revenge – and meets token pretty-boy hero Vaan, who is cheerful and happy and aspires to be

a sky-pirate. How dreamy.

Square Enix does have a few new tricks up its sleeve – one of which is, finally, a map fully rendered in 3D, so you can now move the camera around. If nothing else, the game will be worth playing for that alone.

"Guaranteed to scare the crap out of anyone..."

review@hollywood.com

"If you've never been afraid of the dark, now you will be."

Carl Costner, COLLEGE ENTERTAINMENT NETWORK TV

"For sheer terror, it runs rings around THE RING."

Scott Herrito, TECH-TV

Stay alive for the night!

Totally absorbing and truly frightening, the supernatural thriller DARKNESS FALLS will keep you on the edge-of-your seat.

- The sheer terror and incredible special effects of this cinema hit will give you a very good reason to be afraid of the dark!
- Packed with special features, this Collector's Edition DVD includes 2 audio commentaries, 7 never-before-seen deleted scenes, featurettes that investigate the myth behind the tooth fairy and the behind-the-scenes goings-on with the cast and crew and much more!



BRING IT HOME. BRING IT ON. AVAILABLE FEB 11

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KILLZONE

BEST
FPS

Publisher: Sony **Developer:** Guerilla Games **Release:** Late 2004

Killzone is set to feature the most high-powered weaponry yet

REMEMBER THE EPIC OPENING SCENE OF MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE?

It was just like being in *Saving Private Ryan*, wasn't it? Well, up to a point – it still felt like it was just you, all on your lonesome, up against the might of the entire Nazi goon squad. How much better would it have been if you truly felt part of a tight-knit squad; trying to co-ordinate your attacks over the cacophony of gunfire, explosions and screaming wounded? That's exactly what *Killzone* aims to do.

As part of a small, elite unit, fighting to preserve the freedom of Earth itself in the not too distant future, prepare yourself for some of the most intense,

incident-packed and truly chaotic battle scenes ever seen in videogaming.

Gunfights will be on a scale of pandemonium and frantic activity never before witnessed on PS2. *Killzone* is wringing every last drop of power from your PS2 to create something akin to the world's most pant-soilingly realistic battle simulator.

Nothing else has even come close to *Killzone*'s ability to make you feel part of something so big and panic-inducingly frantic. Think of every "odds stacked against you" movie scene from *Starship Troopers* to *Black Hawk Down* and imagine being smack in the middle of all that carnage. That is *Killzone*.

The environments are particularly detailed and lifelike

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

BEST
MOVIE
TIE-IN

Publisher: EA **Developer:** Lucas Arts **Release:** TBC 2004

EVER WANTED TO BE IN STAR WARS?

No, seriously. Ever wanted to fly a snowspeeder through the legs of an AT-AT in the battle of Hoth? Or dreamed of blasting a Tie Fighter into a million sparkling little pieces then

giving your best "yee har" Han Solo yell? Well sit down, take a deep breath, maybe even take a Valium or two because *Star Wars: Battlefront* is coming and it'll make your every *Star Wars* fantasy come true.

The best bit is that all of your foes on screen are going to be human. Taking its lead from all the massively multiplayer online games on PC, *SW: Battlefront* will be a fully online title, giving you the opportunity to be pretty much anyone within the *Star Wars* universe. Grab a bunch of mates and set up your own X-Wing squadron or join the dark side and squash a few Ewoks in an AT-ST, the choice is all yours. The main aim of *SW: Battlefront* is to recreate all of the famous battles from the movies and drop every single one of us right into the middle. Please, let the force be with this one.

No news to whether a 'Beat the snot out of Jar Jar' mini-game will be included

Characters, vehicles and locations from the prequels also feature

THE GETAWAY PART 2

"Right, who pinched my arse when I was taking my shot?"

Publisher: Sony **Developer:** Studio Soho **Release:** TBC 2004

BLIMEY! All you wannabe geezers feast your peepers on these exclusive screenshots from Sony's forthcoming sequel to its epic crime-based extravaganza – it's *The Getaway Part 2!*

Wait, before you start flooding us with letters of adulation; we've only got screenshots – there has been precious little information released in regards to the plot, characters or gameplay. We're still unsure as to whether the game continues on from the first one or if it's an entirely new story. From what we can gather from the screens it seems that there is a new main character; Mark Hammond is gone and instead we have

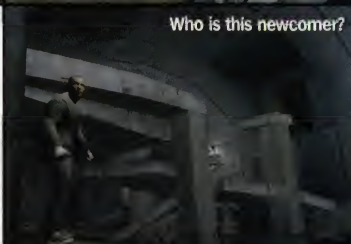
Rooftop shootouts – so cinematic



this mysterious newcomer. There's no news as to whether there will be more than one playable character either ala the original game, or even if it will be set in the photo-realistic London setting.

For now you're just going to have to study these screens, okay? Sorted.

Who is this newcomer?



BEST
CRIME
SIM

RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK



Publisher: THQ **Developer:** Capcom **Release:** TBC 2004

OUTBREAK STARTS AT GROUND ZERO, as the spread of the T-Virus first takes hold on Raccoon City. Unlike the previous games that have focused on the STARS team, *Outbreak* features a cast of everyday citizens, each with their own set of special skills to help them get through the disaster.

The main premise of *Outbreak* is its multiplayer online facet, that allows up to four Raccoon City residents to cooperate in a joint

effort to live through the fateful night. Players can aid the wounded by shouldering their companion, sharing items and helping each other climb obstacles.

Communication is not done through a headset, but instead through a series of voice commands using the right analogue stick, which adds tremendously to the tension.

The controls have seen a complete overhaul, finally adopting a more intuitive 'walk in the direction of the stick' control, while retaining the previous control method for those that prefer it. Map and

With most ammo found as loose bullets in boxes, you have to painstakingly thumb each individual round into your firearm.

As *Outbreak* was previously known as *Resident Evil Online*, the name change is also indicative of the inclusion of a considerable single player game. In solo play you'll team up with computer-controlled players that will cover your back and help you carry items to assist you through the turmoil.

In addition to monitoring your health, you now have to be wary of contracting the T-Virus. When overcome by the virus in single player, you simply die a horribly painful death. Online, virulent players will rise from the dead, and wander the city, hungry for the brains of the remaining players.

Sadly, it looks like Australian zombie lovers may well miss out on the online component of *Outbreak*, as it seems THQ is in two minds about the viability of local servers. We can only cross all our prehensile tendrils and pray that we're allowed to enjoy the game in its entirety.

VIRULENT PLAYERS WILL RISE FROM THE DEAD...

Inventory screens are transparently overlaid in real time, so if you dawdle while reshuffling your items, you could be in for a bit of a shock. There are no more time-outs for reloading - you have to do that on the fly as well.



Mark Wilkins: a security guard with a penchant for sugar coated pastries



HERE'S WHO'S LEFT

Get to know the people you're going to spend your last hours in hysteria with ...



KEVIN RYMAN - RPD

Kevin's a wisecracking veteran of the local police force. Lucky for him, he backs up his fast talk with a .45 Magnum. He also bears a striking resemblance to Tom Cruise. Here's hoping he doesn't overact as much ...



MARK WILKINS - SECURITY GUARD

Mark's a Vietnam veteran whose considerable bulk means that he's a physical force to be reckoned with, and he can demolish a whole box of Krispy Kreme donuts in one sitting.



GEORGE HAMILTON - DOCTOR

George's pharmaceutical experience means he can manufacture useful medicines from common ingredients, and not take fifteen minutes to fill the prescription.



CINDY LENNOX - WAITRESS

The innocent Cindy is not only cute as a button, but she also carries a satchel for herbs and makes a great Black Russian. Sounds like she'd be great company on a dark and lonely night ...



DAVID KING - PLUMBER

After wading through poo for a living, Dave isn't too shocked by the recent events. Well known for hurling wrenches at people who who ask him to take a look at their 'pipe'.



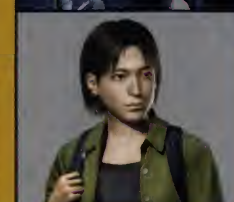
ALYSSA ASHCROFT - REPORTER

This sassy blonde's 'misspent' youth means she's a crack shot with a gun and has the skills to pick locks too. Does her name indicate links to the Umbrella Corporation?



JIM CHAPMAN - SUBWAY ATTENDANT

The lovechild of Rudi Huxtable and Steve Urkel, Jim's annoying persona seems to repel brain-chomping monsters, as well as his teammates. Just don't mention the hair.



YOKO SUZUKI - STUDENT

Yoko's handy backpack means she can carry a lot of swag, and her small size means she can easily hide from roving zombie mobs. We still blame her for breaking up The Beatles, though ...

R:RACING EVOLUTION

Publisher: EA **Developer:** Namco **Release:** March

WHILE THE RIDGE RACER GAMES KEPT US ALL GLEEFULLY

entertained on PSone, the PS2 incarnation was a bit of a shambles. Thanks mainly to *Gran Turismo*, things had moved on and unfortunately *Ridge Racer 5* hadn't. The guys behind the RR series have taken their time with this next offering. Every year we've been expecting the new *Ridge Racer*, in a glorious return to form for the series, but nothing has materialised ... until now.

With a new name, a new look and a new feel, *Ridge Racer* is back ... sort of. Sounding like more of a revolution, *R: Racing Evolution* has completely ditched the purely arcade, huge powersliding

handling of the previous games and opted for something far more GT-ish. Gone are the sexily styled fantasy cars to be replaced by real world Nissan Skylines, Dodge Vipers and even the hallowed McLaren F1. In a bout of V8 Supercars *Race Driver* thievery they've even included a full story mode where you get to play as a sexy driving minx.

With a number of unique innovations including a very clever tailgating meter that gradually rises as you pressure the car in front until the driver is far more prone to making a mistake and letting you past, *R:Racing Evolution* is looking very tasty indeed. A GT4 beater? We'll let you know in the next few months.

**BEST
ARCADE
RACER**



Say goodbye to the overly colourful, cartoony visuals

ALSO ON THE RADAR

GTA: SAN ANDREAS

Publisher: Take 2 **Developer:** Rockstar North **Release:** Late 2004

IN TYPICAL TIGHT-LIPPED

ROCKSTAR FASHION there is absolutely zero information, screens or promotional plush toys available for the hotly anticipated sequel in the blockbuster franchise. All we know is the name (see page 11) and that it's coming before the end of 2004. Joy!

But what of new features? We can only hope that the gunplay is improved, as it's been the only substantial weakness of the previous two *GTA* games. Perhaps the clunky lock-on targeting could be replaced by a much simpler auto-aim system, along the same lines as EA's *Freedom Fighters*. And while we're on the subject of that team-based shooter, why not have a similar system where you commit crimes and add to your 'criminal notoriety' metre, enabling you to hire more goons to fight alongside you?

Obviously the biggest enhancement they could make to the series would be online play; imagine facing off against other gangs, creating carnage in an online city. Of course, this is probably a bit too optimistic for this generation, and most likely won't be a feature of the series until the PS3, but why not give us some bonus split-screen check point races or city-wide deathmatches?

It's guaranteed to be big, bad and controversial, and we can't wait!

TOMB RAIDER 7

Publisher: Atari **Developer:** Crystal Dynamics **Release:** TBC 2004

CORE DESIGN, UK based developer of the first six instalments of the popular series, was dumped last year from future *Tomb Raider* projects in favour of the US based Crystal Dynamics, of *Legacy of Kain* fame. *Angel of Darkness* was supposed to be the first chapter in a three part series, so we can only assume that the next game will take up where AOD left off. Here's hoping that Crystal Dynamics will bring some of the high-speed exuberance of it's blood-sucking series to the ageing Lara Croft franchise.

HITMAN CONTRACTS

Publisher: Atari **Developer:** Io Interactive **Release:** Autumn 2004

YES, THAT SLAP-HEADED KILLING MACHINE AGENT 47 is coming back to slip some piano wire around your wrist and pull them tight onto the controller. *Hitman: Contracts*, will be the most disturbing episode in the series yet, according to developer Io Interactive. A brand new graphics engine is in place to add extra realism to the unsavoury acts, along with more weapons, more death animations and a more gradual learning curve to make it more accessible to newbies.

RAINBOW SIX 3

Publisher: Ubisoft **Developer:** Red Storm Entertainment **Release:** March

PROVIDING A HAPPY MEDIUM

between an action FPS and a stealth-based simulation game, *RS3* pits you against unforgiving terrorist AI in a variety of scenarios such as hostage liberation and bomb disposal. In preparation for your mission, you can arm yourself with an assortment of real world firearms, as well as a selection of other equipment, such as flash bang grenades, gas masks and breaching charges. To make it significantly easier to spot the enemy hiding amongst the ultra-realistic shadowing effects, each team member is equipped as standard with Sam Fisher-style goggles capable of lowlight and thermal vision.

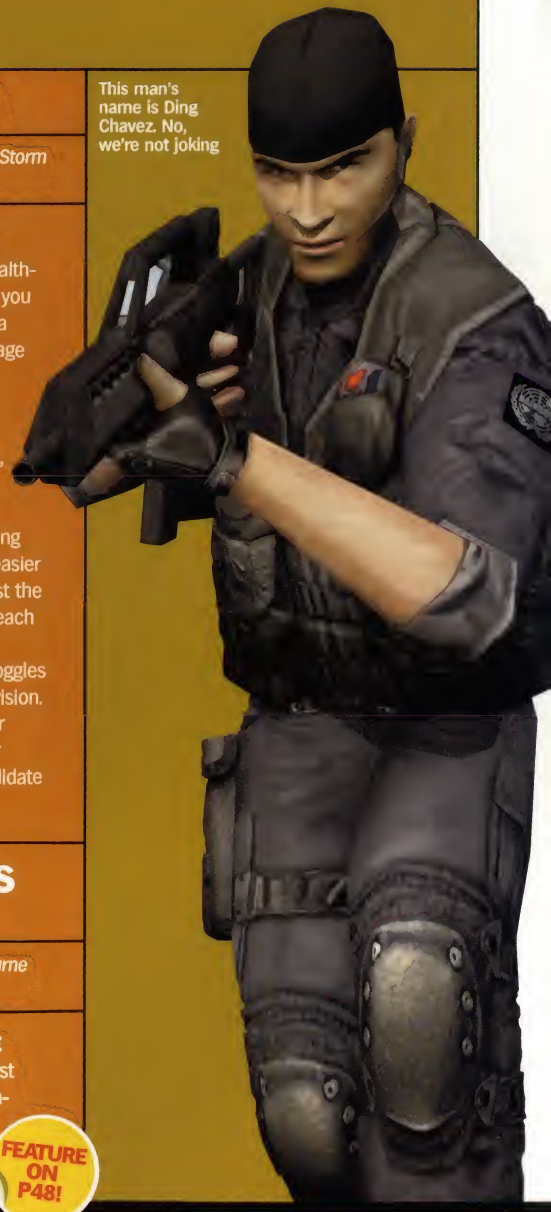
With an extensive single player campaign and diverse multiplayer options, *RS3* will be a strong candidate for your FPS dollar in 2004.

TRANSFORMERS ARMADA

Publisher: Atari **Developer:** Melbourne House **Release:** TBC 2004

FOR THE VERY LATEST ON THE GAME that looks set to be the first Australian made, worldwide mega-hit, read our exclusive in-depth feature in this very issue!

This man's name is Ding Chavez. No, we're not joking



**FEATURE
ON
P48!**

DIG IN FOR THE NIGHT

**"...the best military thriller
since BLACK HAWK DOWN"**

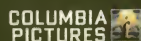
Richard Horrmann, Parade Magazine Radio.

From the director of **TRAINING DAY** comes this year's most gripping military thriller, where making the wrong decision is the right thing to do. **TEARS OF THE SUN** is action-packed entertainment you can't afford to miss.

Starring action hero Bruce Willis, (**DIE HARD**, **ARMAGEDDON**), Monica Bellucci (**THE MATRIX RELOADED**), and Cole Hauser (**2 FAST 2 FURIOUS**).

HOURS OF EXTRAS INCLUDING:

Director's commentary. Never-before-seen deleted scenes. Behind-the-scenes feature on the making of the movie with cast interviews. True stories from survivors of civil unrest in Africa.



BRING IT HOME. BRING IT ON.

**AVAILABLE
NOW**

DON'T BE SO STOOPID

10 reasons why games have still got a lot of growing up to do



Although we love them, sometimes a little too much, and devote far too much of our lives to them "yes dear, I'm coming for dinner in just a second" games can just as easily make us want to open the window, lob our PS2 onto the street below and chuck the fridge out on top of it ... just to make sure it's properly dead. You'd think games had been around long enough now for developers not to be still making fundamental errors that force us to question our own sanity in forking out wads of cash for something that makes us spit bile like a rabid dog. But no, in spite of our constant criticisms and yelling and screaming that things just have to change, there are still hundreds of games out there on the shelves that will make you dribble tears of pure, concentrated frustration into the crevices of your Dual Shocks. In the hope that some of these developers might sit up and take notice we've compiled a list of the ten worst offenders.

1. "IT'S IN HERE SOMEWHERE"

THE NEVERENDING POCKETS

Not only are game characters mighty warriors, skilled in all forms of combat and totally devoid of fear but they're bloody strong too. Not just in the usual pick up a fire-breathing dragon and lob him over the cliff to his doom, but in having to lug all that equipment around for the whole game. Where the hell do they keep it all? Shotguns, dynamite, health packs, ancient artefacts, rocket launchers, red, blue and yellow keys, flamethrowers, notebooks from dead scientists, samurai swords, magical herbs, 200 rounds of ammo, a compass and a rolled up bus ticket. Pockets in PS2 land must be deeper than the ocean. Once again it ruins the whole façade of realism and makes it patently clear that all we're doing is playing a rather simple videogame. So much for getting lost within a tangibly real world inside your PS2.

We want more games like *Fire Warrior* where you can only carry two weapons at a time or *Blade 2* where you get to actually see the selected equipment strapped to your back and ready to dish out some pain. It adds a whole new element when you have to decide what to ditch and what will prove most useful. It's not that revolutionary. It's only what we'd do in the real world if we found ourselves in that situation.



2. "STOP DIGGING THAT HOLE AND CANCEL THE COFFIN!"

THE DISAPPEARING CORPSES

When you've slogged away for a couple of hours through wave after wave of flesh eating zombies, mutant hounds, alien invaders and hired mercenaries you'd like some sort of reward for your efforts. A nice, big pile of bodies to show how the odds had been stacked against you or a trail of severed limbs and splattered entrails to show your heroic progress would be nice, but it's rarely the case. No sooner have you turned your back on a still twitching corpse than they mysteriously disappear, leaving a pristine shag pile where there was once a pool of congealed blood and guts.

Obviously grave digging isn't one of the more popular career choices in PS2 land. And who can blame them? When all the bodies disappear before they've had time to pick up the shovel, what's the point? Either Dr Frankenstein's working overtime on a new monster (go for a hot Goth chick this time, Frankie) or games are in need of a little injection of realism.

If you happen to pass along the same corridor where two hours previously there was a gunfight to end all gunfights the aftermath should still be visible. Bullet holes should still pepper the masonry. Weapons and carcasses should still be strewn across the floor. Blown up cars should remain as a smouldering pile of scrap and not spirited away by the brave traffic wardens who don't mind working in the middle of night in parts of town that the police and the army are too scared to venture into. But instead of brave traffic wardens we get lazy developers who think that enemies who blink out of existence like a faulty light bulbs are still cutting edge.

It's all about atmosphere and being able to retread covered ground and witness the results of your toils – nobody else's, just your own personal experiences. Leaving your own little warzone behind you as you progress through a game adds immensely to your feeling of immersion within it.

Fallen corpses could even be used to identify your passage through levels. Ammo that can't be retrieved now could be picked up later. Bodies could be dragged to form blockades to slow down pursuers. Charred wreckages could be used as cover from incoming fire. It's only what they'd do in the movies and we want some of that too.



3. "I WONDER WHAT THIS DOES?"

THE EMPTY ROOMS

It's in our nature to be curious. We can't help it. Five seconds after your Nan has left you sitting on the couch to go and make a nice cuppa, you're up looking at the dusty book shelves, fiddling with the ornaments and frantically trying to stuff that broken doll's arm down the side of the cushion.

It's no different when we enter a game world. We want to mess about and see what's possible. The SWAT team outside the door can wait a few minutes while we indulge our curiosity. It's not indulged for long though is it? It only takes playing a couple of games to know that if it's not directly related to solving a puzzle it doesn't exist. It's why objects stand out like sore thumbs. Everything else is usually painted onto the background and you're left clicking all over the place only to be met by a message saying "This is not of any use."

If there's a chess set on the table in someone's sitting room we want to be able to sit down and have a game. Or at least be able to knock the pieces all over the floor. If there's a picture hanging on the wall it would be nice to be able to knock it sideways or have it smash on the floor and the owner threaten to kick you out if you cause any more damage. *Metal Gear Solid 2* is a fiddler's delight. It lets you tip over the ice bucket and shoot each individual cube. It lets you open lockers and ogle the girlie pictures. The bikini posing posters have even been taken from *FHM*. We want more games like this. Titles that display a level of care and attention to detail that goes way beyond the challenges and puzzles within the game. C'mon developers out there, videogames are supposed to be a virtual playground. Put more of the 'play' in there.

4. "WHY CAN'T I GO THERE?"

THE MYTHICAL INVISIBLE BARRIER

Ever come face to face with the biggest, ugliest, limb tearing, bowel loosening creature you've ever had the unfortunate pleasure of laying eyes on (not including the mother in law) and just wanted to run off into the woods? Ever need to get to that door, just over there, almost within touching distance and not been able to climb over a 20cm high wall? Ever gazed longingly at those lush green pastures and that temptingly steep plummet off the side of the road and just wanted to drive off into the distance? These are all things that games tantalise and tease you with but simply refuse to let you actually do.

Why can't we plough off the side of a cliff in *Gran Turismo* or try to create our own shortcuts through the forest and see how long it is before we're wrapped around a hoofing great oak tree? Why can't we sneak up on the goose stepping nazis in *Medal of Honor* by scrabbling through the undergrowth and coming up on their blind side? Why can't we quickly leap off the path when we hear Nobunaga's minions coming towards us in *Onimusha* and hide behind a tree until they've blundered past? Why? Because the makers constantly envelope you inside an invisible tunnel that takes one path through the game and will resolutely refuse to let you deviate from it. Nothing suspends belief more than that invisible wall that stops your car dead or has your little character running on the spot without actually getting anywhere, forcing you to turn around and head straight back for that designated path like some mindless tourist. Don't bother wasting your time making the games look so luscious if all we're going to do is follow a set path through the game. It's our game. We're curious. Let us play.



5. "OH DEAR, I SEEM TO HAVE HAD MY HEAD CLEAVED IN TWO, BETTER FIND A HEALTH PACK"

THE MIRACULOUSLY RESILIENT BULLET MAGNET

If you've ever trodden on an upturned plug, stubbed your toe while walking up the stairs or trapped your family jewels in your zipper you'll know that it hurts, rather a lot. Enough to make you leap around the room like a lunatic until the pain subsides. Sadly this is something that you'll never see from games characters, even when it's something slightly more damaging than a throbbing big toe. Slice them with a massive sword and the only reaction you'll get is a little squirt of red juice. Unload a magazine into them and they might go down after the twentieth bullet has made their insides look like a meat lover's pizza. Boss fights are the pinnacle of this utter stupidity. You could probably have levelled an entire city by the time you've finished firing, slashing and throwing everything you've got at one single, albeit rather large brute.

We want more lethality in our games. Nothing makes hiding in the shadows, scrabbling around in the sewers or tip toeing from tree to tree more tense than the fear of one solitary bullet putting an abrupt end to your plans. Fair enough, a bulletproof vest will help to stop a few rounds but that just makes things even more nerve wrenchingly fraught. Now you've not only got to take him down before he can loose off one single death-dealing bullet in your direction but you've got to hit him between the eyes with a perfect head shot. This is why stealth was invented in the first place. This is what it really feels like to be a member of an elite unit. The trepidation, the fear and the fallibility. No more sentries with kevlar for skin, puncture-resistant vital organs and skulls made out of the stuff they use for black box flight recorders, please.

6. "YOU NEED THE DOOR CODE"

THE RIDICULOUSLY CONVOLUTED PUZZLE

If you had a safe with a demon summoning chalice locked inside of it would you leave blatantly obvious clues lying around your mansion as to how to get into it? If you needed three different keys and a password to open up your study would you assiduously distribute them around a five-mile radius from your house? Checking your e-mails every day would be a right bloody tortuous chore. Nobody has colour-coded keys and then leaves a huge big sign on the door saying, "use red key here." Nor do they hide those keys inside coffins and at the bottom of wells and then leave written clues to help out the burglars. They force us to traipse back and forth like the butt of some treasure hunt joke and we're supposed to find it enjoyable?

It's time to stop the key collecting, pass code uncovering and note finding and make the challenges a little more believable. If you need to get into the study how about dressing up as woman, following the butler to his local pub, chatting him up and buying him a few drinks, getting invited back to his place, spiking his drink and then rifling through his suit for the key. It beats having to scour every room in the place and click on every bit of wall just in case you missed that glinting shiny ruby, of which you need three to fit into that appropriately shaped ornament, on the mantelpiece, in front of that big painting that has a switch beside it.

"Would you like to pull the switch?" NO! I'd just like to visit one single house where you can hold a gun to the owner's head and have him blurt out the combination before peeing all over the floor in fright. Forget the convolutedness and get on with realism, guys.

7. "C'MON LET ME IN"

THE CLASSIC LOCKED DOOR CONUNDRUM

You give the handle a good yanking but all you get in return are those dreaded words "You need the blue key." What blue key? Oh, you mean the one that can be found two miles away, past all those shambling zombies, inside that secure looking building, locked up inside a safe that only a red key can open. Well why didn't you just say so? It's rubbish isn't it? Arnie can break down doors with his gorilla sized fists, other less monstrosly muscled heroes use their trusty old shoulder and even the physically inept can always whip out that handy little plastic credit card. C'mon, we all know that everyone carries a credit card in their wallet but can we employ any of these normal, everyday techniques? Oh no.

But wait, that's not even the worst of it. We don't have a credit card in our pocket or a battering ram for a shoulder. No, we've only got a six shooter in our pocket, an M16 slung over our shoulder and a rocket launcher tucked snugly away in our rucksack. Can we use any of them to blast the door into a thousand pieces? Hell no. Where's the fun in that? It's what any normal person would do, so why can't the maker's realise this and start injecting a bit of real life sanity into our gaming. It's even worse when there's a window right next to the door. If a drunken man can stumble home from the pub after losing his keys in the kebab shop and still use the few working brain cells in his swaying head to chuck a pot plant through the window and clamber into bed, why can't a supposedly intelligent, world saving hero?



8. "TIME FOR ANOTHER CUP OF TEA"

THE DREADED LOADING TIMES

Nothing destroys your enjoyment and the flow of a game more than a damned loading screen. It might not be as bad now as it was in the days of the original *Resident Evil*, when simply stepping into a different room caused an irritating delay every single time, but it's still frustrating having to sit in front of your TV while that little loading bar creeps ever so slowly forward. Why can't more games be like *Jak and Daxter* or *GTA Vice City*? They manage to cram entire cities onto one little disc and seamlessly load each location in the background so that you can get on with having fun without any interruptions. We can all tolerate a bit of loading at the start of a game but having to lay down your pad and sit and twiddle your thumbs just as the adrenalin started pumping totally spoils the whole experience. And don't get us started on multiplayer games.

We've given up on some of the finest multiplayer titles to have entered these offices simply because we couldn't stand having to wait for the loading between each go. If you've already loaded a level and you just want to have a re-match there should be no reason why you can't just dive straight back in. Any game that commits this heinous crime should be taken to the park at the weekend and used as a frisbee.



9. "THAT'S A GOOD IDEA, ANYWAY..."

THE BLUNKERED DEVELOPERS

Last but not most certainly not least is that far too common feeling that developers haven't actually played their own game. It's obvious from the start of every single poor game just what the problem is. If we can spot the flaws within a few minutes of play surely they can after months and months of development. Stop wasting our time and money and start playing the damn thing to see if it's actually enjoyable. And while you're at it start playing other games too. Maybe if the developers of *The Getaway* had played *Metal Gear Solid* beforehand they might have realised that controlling your character doesn't have to be as painstaking as eating dinner with your toes. They're both third-person action games, similar cameras, similar controls, yet one is genius and the other is dire. Why?

There needs to be more appreciation of what works in games and which titles are the most successful. Standard control set ups are a must. Everyone on the planet owns *Tony*

Hawk and none of us want to have to learn a new button configuration every time we play a different extreme sports game. Copy what's good. If the fundamentals like cameras and controls have been tried and proven successful in other titles quit wasting your time on trying to re-invent the wheel and use what's out there. We don't mind as long as it's a totally different setting and completely fresh gaming idea. They've been doing this for years on PC. Licensing out game engines so that the developers of new games don't have wasting their time on the technical stuff and can concentrate on a great story and superb setting.




10. "I'VE GOT A ROCKET LAUNCHER, YOU'VE GOT TWO LEGS AND AN ARM MISSING, GIVE IT UP"

BRAINLESS MORONS EVERYWHERE

You're standing in a hallway with an axe-wielding maniac shambling towards you. You raise your machine gun and point it at his head. Absolutely no recognition of his impending doom or fear of a bullet as he continues to lumber this way. You pull the trigger and pump a couple of rounds into his chest. His clean white t-shirt develops a nice squelchy tomato stain but he's still coming forward without the slightest flinch. A whole magazine later he's finally lying on the floor in a pool of guts and offal but things aren't over yet. Now his mate, who saw the whole thing, is shambling towards you with an axe in his hand and it's déjà vu all over again.

What is it with the blind stupidity of game world inhabitants? You'd think that after the fifth goon has hit the floor in a crumpled, bullet riddled heap his buddies would realise that they're a bit outgunned and would be better off running away for back up. But no, they just keep on coming until there's a pile of bodies the size of Mount Everest.

It's all so predictable. Why can't they display some real emotion? Have soldiers call out to each other, pinpointing their attacks and letting each other know of your position. We want goons pleading not to be shot when you've got them, backed into a corner. We want them wailing in agony when they've lost an arm. How shocked would you be if in the middle of the usual samey gunfight the last man threw down his gun and put his hands in the air? A bit shocked, stunned and speechless? Exactly. We want some of that to spice up our belief that there really is a living world inside our PS2. 

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A TAKE-TWO COMPANY



RETRO AD

PART TWO

WORDS: TRISTAN OGILVIE



We asked for it and ever since we did the old game ads have surged into the

office on a constant wave of lump-in-throat inducing nostalgia from you, our faithful readers. Perhaps next time we'll ask you to send in your favourite currency, or most memorable blank cheque. At any rate, here they are; the good, the bad and the ugly. Well, two out of three ain't bad, unless of course it's a Meatloaf song ...

Yes, that is a gun in our package and we are happy to see you.

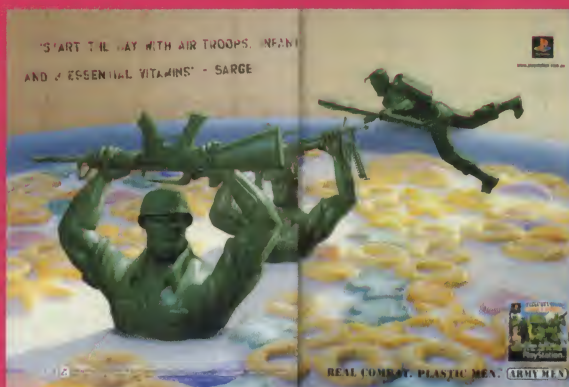


TITLE: Lethal Enforcers
YEAR: 1992

SYSTEM: Sega Mega CD

THE AD: Ah double entendres, is there no better 'tool' for selling videogames? Konami claims that it is packing a firearm in its 'package' and it's happy to see us? Excuse us while we run the other way!

THE GAME: Lethal Enforcers may have been an overwhelmingly average light gun game, but it can be credited with contributing to the inspiration behind the quality Time Crisis and Virtua Cop games.



TITLE: Army Men: Sarge's Heroes
YEAR: 1999

SYSTEM: PSone

THE AD: One of the many A-grade ads run for the Army Men series. If 3DO had put more cash into developing the games rather than the ads, then perhaps the series wouldn't be the industry joke it is today.

THE GAME: We're pretty confident that Sarge's Heroes was less fun than realising you just ate an army man figurine in your bowl of cereal.

ALSO RETRO
Really expensive sneakers with flashing lights & totally pointless air pump systems. You know you fell for it too!



TRANSFORMERS TRIVIA
Transformers: The Movie featured the voices of Star Trek's Leonard Nimoy, Monty Python's Eric Idle and Citizen Kane's Orson Welles.

Optimus Prime – actually quite a nice bloke in real life



One of the original Deceptacones designed specifically for the game

Transformers Armada is packed to the brim with special effects

WORDS: TRISTAN OGILVIE

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE?

Videogames based on cartoon licenses are generally either poorly designed or just for kids. OPS2 finds out that Australian made Transformers Armada: Prelude to Energon is a surprising exception to the rule ...



If ever there was a cartoon license screaming to be converted into a great videogame, it's *The Transformers*. The mixture of shooting and driving in a game conversion would blend quite naturally, as the Transformers themselves are, with few exceptions, both gun-toting robots and stylish automobiles in one. But bizarrely, from previous incarnations on several systems from the Commodore 64 to the Nintendo 64, there has never been a truly great game based on the hallowed cartoon series. Enter Australia's own developers, Melbourne House.

Transformers Armada: Prelude to Energon began development in April of 2002. At that time Melbourne House was split into two development teams; one devoted to racing games and one devoted to action games. However, by January 2003 the project had become stale. "The action team was making this game and at a certain point in the development we [at the racing team] were called in to take it on and we didn't feel that it was going in the right direction," explains Andrew Carter, Executive Producer of *Transformers Armada* and Melbourne House Vice President. "It was a game targeted purely at young children; a typical cartoon license game and that's why we ditched it. Atari were supportive in us doing that and we were lucky enough to be able to start the project again from scratch".

GRAND THEFT AUTOBOT

While Melbourne House was afforded the luxury of starting over, with it came an enormous pressure to perform. From that point, the two separate teams at Melbourne House merged, resulting in more than 60 individuals working on the project. In hindsight it seems quite logical; each team

was able to bring vital strengths to a game that is essentially a cohesive blend of driving and shooting. Where *Transformers Armada* was initially a painfully linear mission-based game with very basic objectives in each level, under Carter's direction it quickly became more akin to a *GTA*-style driving/shooting hybrid set in massively sprawling environments. The childish cartoon-like art design was ditched in favour of a more realistic visual style and the difficulty was increased to provide a much stiffer challenge – one more suitable for an adult market that had grown up with the original *Transformers* series in the 1980s.

IT'S QUITE EASY TO FIND YOURSELF IN AWE OF TRANSFORMERS ARMADA IN ITS CURRENT STATE

"I wasn't preoccupied with designing a game for the kids of today, because I think kids today seem to like things like *Grand Theft Auto*, even though it's perceived as an adult game" Carter says. "So it seemed to me that if we could make something that would appeal to a slightly older group, rather than deliver a stereotypical cartoon conversion, than it would automatically appeal to the younger kids who like *Transformers Armada*".

And it seems that Carter has achieved his goal. It's quite easy to find yourself in awe of *Transformers Armada* in its current state. It may seem very pretty in static screenshots but seeing it in motion will absolutely floor you. So much so that it's hard not to declare it one of the best looking games on the PS2, right up there with the →



KNOW YOUR AUTOBOT

There are three playable characters in *Transformers Armada*. Each have their own pros and cons; Optimus Prime is slow but can carry more Mini-Cons, Hot Shot is fast but can carry less and Red Alert is a happy medium.

OPTIMUS PRIME

Optimus Prime is the leader of the Autobots and a powerful force of goodness, courage and wisdom in the battle against those crazy Decepticons. He comes to the aid of all living creatures whose freedom is threatened. He was also killed in *Transformers: The Movie*, but still lives on *Weekend at Bernie's*-style in the TV series.

RED ALERT

Red Alert is a valued doctor who has saved the lives of many Autobots. He has risked his life many times to retrieve wounded comrades during battles. Apparently he and Optimus are old drinking buddies. This one time they got so drunk that Red Alert tried to transform and got stuck half way. Scared the hell out of the neighbourhood children.

HOT SHOT

Hot Shot is a young, heroic fighter who rushes into danger without regard to his own safety. He courageously charges into the middle of the fight to aid his friends in battle. He has taken charge in several battles, showing great leadership potential. He's also the most likely successor to lead the Autobots if Optimus Prime gets killed ... again.



TRANSFORMER TRIVIA
In the third series of the TV show, many laser blast sound effects were sampled from C3-PO's voice from the Star Wars movies.



The soundtrack to *Transformers: The Movie* featured such 'memorable' artists as Lion, Kick Axe, NRG and none other than "Weird Al" Yankovic.

The environments are detailed and vibrant



Chi-chor-chor-chor-chic!



BIGGER IS BETTER


While blasting the Deceptacones may be a lot of fun, things get really interesting when you come up against one of the Deceptacon Bosses, as they can transform just like you. The first couple of Boss encounters are pretty fair; you come up against the Jet Starscream early on in Alaska, but later on you'll blast your way through the interior of a massive aircraft carrier only to have the whole thing transform into the giant Deceptacon Tidal Wave. If you think that's big, then wait til you see the planet-sized Unicron ...



likes of *GT3* and *MGS2*. For starters, the draw distance easily trumps that of similar open environment-based games such as the *GTA* series and *Jak II*. For example, in the Amazon level *OPS2* stood on an elevated point and saw an ancient temple on a mountain top seemingly kilometres off in the distance. Eventually we made our way through the valley in between and when we reached the temple we were able to turn and look back at where we were just moments ago. What really impressed us was that not *once* did an obtrusive loading screen pop up in the process of wandering over several hundred metres in-game!

"There is a perception that because we are in Australia somehow the game may be technically not as advanced as games produced in the US, Europe or Japan," Carter says. "But we've had excellent feedback from Atari representatives in the US. We already had really strong technology in racing games, but because the racing market is so crowded it was lost on the radar compared to the likes of Codemasters or Polyphony. With *Transformers Armada*, we're tapping into a genre that is massively popular at the moment, and thus we're getting more attention and the opportunity to surprise people and prove that we can deliver world class products."

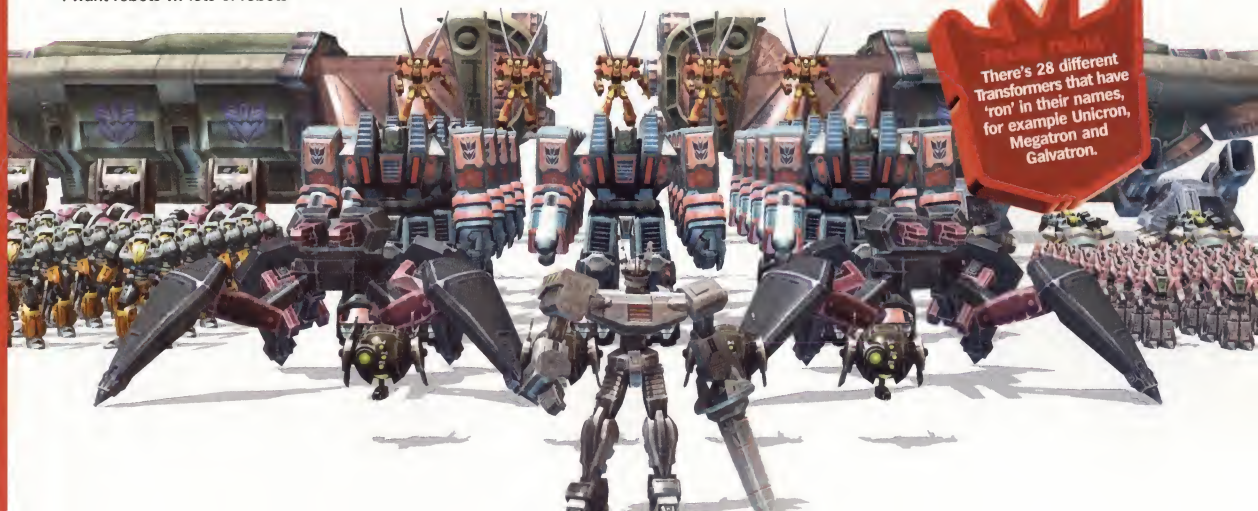
GENIUS IN DISGUISE

Transformers Armada is as satisfyingly deep as it is surprisingly well-designed. Experiencing the game hands-on means combating the fiercely realistic AI of the enemy Deceptacones, who instinctively use their surrounding environment for cover and co-operate with each other in complex attack patterns such as flanking you and attacking you from both sides. Of course, your ability to transform adds an element to the gameplay that is unique to the *Transformers* license, as you can transform at any time using the  button and instantly change the dynamic of the gameplay. When we were controlling the iconic Optimus Prime, we couldn't wipe the grin off our faces after blasting a troop of enemies with our laser rifle, leaping off a cliff, transforming into a truck (complete with *that* sound effect), landing hundreds of metres below and speeding off to the next location.

Additional weaponry and other power-ups come in the form of 'Mini-Cons'. Collecting Mini-Cons is a huge part of the *Transformers Armada* experience. Mini-Cons are like miniature Transformers, that physically combine with your chosen Autobot; endowing it with new abilities. There are 40 Mini-Cons to find throughout the eight different locations in *Transformers Armada* and they offer many enhancements, from homing missiles and basic shield power-ups, to *Predator*-style cloaking abilities and wings that enable you to glide.

While none of the Mini-Cons we've seen so far are particularly

"I want robots ... lots of robots"



There's 28 different Transformers that have 'ron' in their names, for example Unicron, Megatron and Galvatron.


IT'S HARD NOT TO DECLARE IT ONE OF THE BEST LOOKING GAMES ON THE PS2, RIGHT UP THERE WITH *GT3* AND *MGS2*

original, we can't help but wonder why the concepts behind them haven't been used more frequently in other games. Take the Tractor Beam Mini-Con, reminiscent of the Gravity Disruptor weapon in *Turok Evolution*, which enables you to shoot a beam of light at enemies, and then drag them about the place, knocking over other enemies like ten pins before flipping them up in the air and shooting them clay pigeon-style. Discord, inspired by *Perfect Dark's* Psychosis Gun, is a Mini-Con that enables you to turn enemies against each other, forcing them to battle amongst themselves while you pick them off from afar.

DEFINING A NEW MEDIUM

In creating *Transformers Armada*, Melbourne House has specifically designed a product that, while remaining true to the license, is less of a conversion and more of an original interpretation, in much the same way as films such as *Spider-Man* have differed from their comic book roots. Carter continued, "The cartoon is designed in it's own way, so we really wanted to try and invent and define what *Transformers* is as a PS2 game, which meant trying to make something that would appeal to an older age group. We needed to convert *Transformers* into something that's a lot more sophisticated than a toy or cartoon. We wanted to make a game that could stand up by itself; license or no license."

Consequently, Carter and his team have produced many original characters for the game that have never featured in the TV series. With the exception of three Autobots, five Deceptacon Bosses and three sidekicks that fight alongside you, all of the other enemies and Mini-Cons are brand new, making what could have easily been a very familiar experience for *Transformers* fans far more fresh and exciting.

It's unlikely that anyone will be left wanting when they play *Transformers Armada*. Melbourne House has taken a previously troublesome license that targets a specific demographic, and crafted a game that is suitable for anyone. When asked what one thing pleases him the most about the game Andrew Carter replies, "The thing that's cool about it is the balance of everything; the visuals, gameplay, sound and controls are all at a high level. There are no big weaknesses." Certainly *Transformers Armada: Prelude to Energon* seems to be delivering on every level; it's more than you could ask for, more than you'd expect to get and definitely more than meets the eye. 

"So my fruitcake isn't
moist enough,

eh, Vera?"



Pick a grudge. Any grudge. Destruction Derby Arenas.

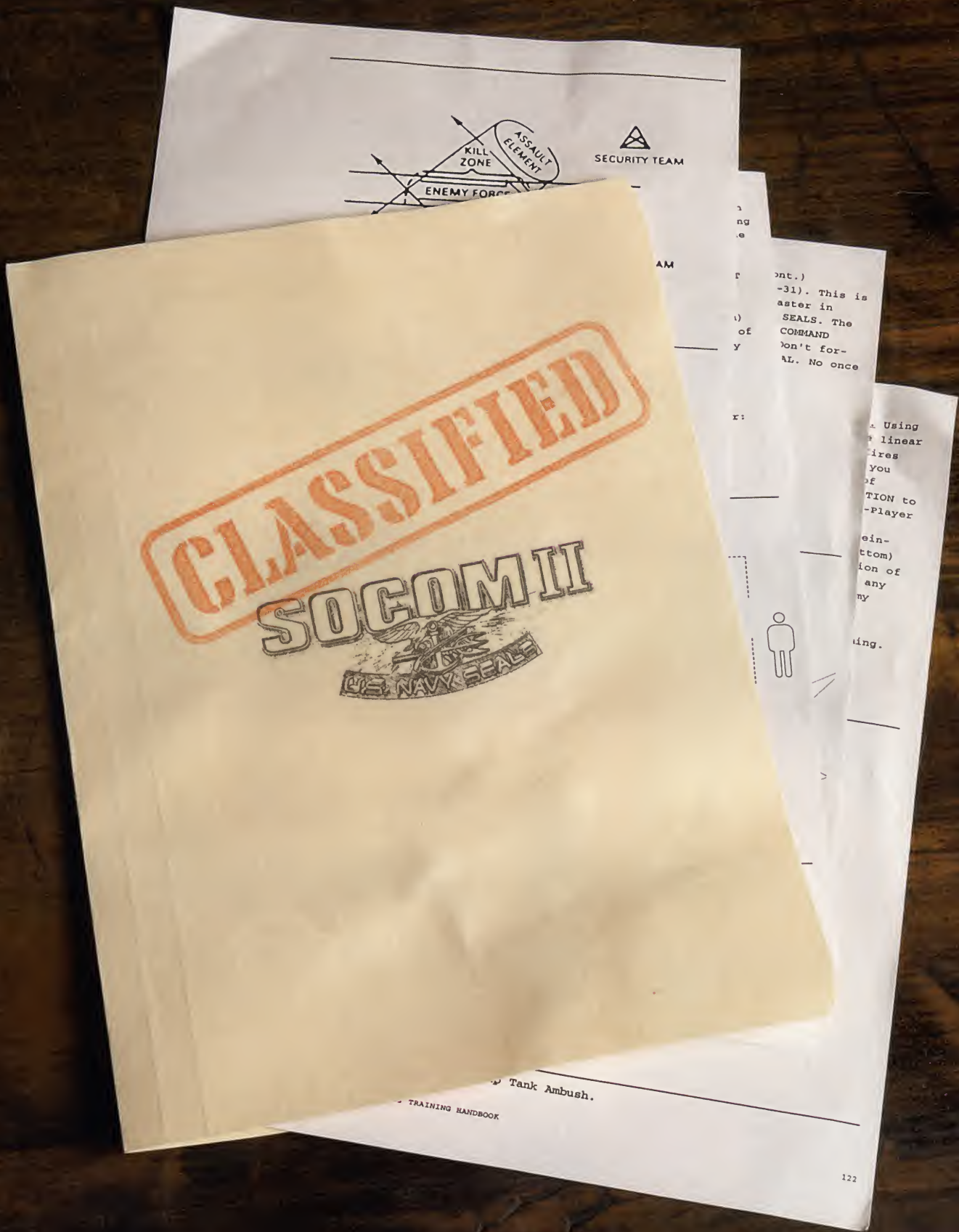
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anyone?
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COMING IN MARCH 2004.

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Next time you head off to spend your hard-earned cash on a PlayStation 2 game, make sure you read our reviews first.

REVIEW RATINGS

HERE'S WHAT OUR REVIEW SCORES STAND FOR:

- 10/10** Nigh on revolutionary. A game that could change the face of gaming forever
- 09/10** A truly astonishing game. If you have a PlayStation 2, you need this now
- 08/10** Highly recommended
- 07/10** Good, solid fare that's definitely well worth a look
- 06/10** Better than average, and ideal for hardcore fans of the genre
- 05/10** An average game
- 04/10** Poor, but still with the odd moment
- 03/10** Extremely disappointing
- 02/10** To be avoided
- 01/10** Beer mat

THE OPS2 AWARDS

We don't hand out high scores for nothing, so when you see one of these, you'll know it's a sign of quality. Look for them on game boxes.



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!

The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!

The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

DVD / MUSIC / MEDIA
media

DVD RELEASES080

Finding Nemo/American Wedding/Dungeons & Dragons: Scourge of Worlds/Later with Jools Holland: Party



FINAL FANTASY X-2054

Is it really the *Final Fantasy*? No, of course not ...

JAMES BOND: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING058

Bond in third-person. Was it a wise move?

MAXIMO VS. THE ARMY OF ZIN062

The old school platformer returns with a fresh pair of shorts ...

KILLSWITCH064

Namco lets you shoot without looking ...

066 MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

067 I-NINJA

068 WHIPLASH

070 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

071 ENERGY AIRFORCE

072 MEGA MAN X7

073 DESTRUCTION DERBY ARENAS

073 TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2004

074 CRICKET 2004

075 CELEBRITY DEATHMATCH

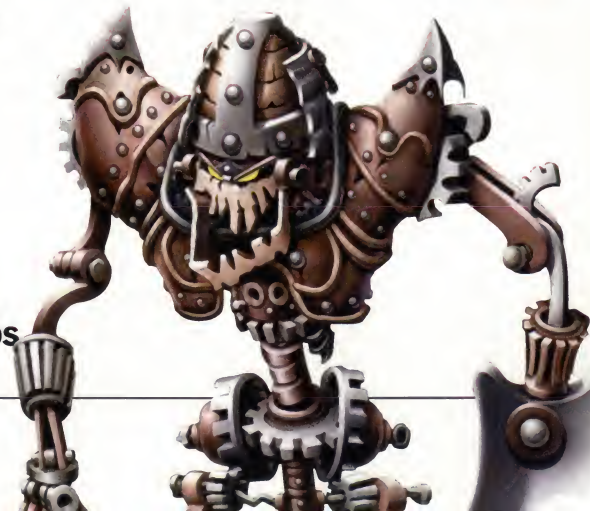
075 FORD RACING 2

076 NAVAL OPS: WARSHIP GUNNER

076 ARC THE LAD: TWILIGHT OF THE SPIRITS

078 DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: XTREME LEGENDS

078 DYNASTY TACTICS 2



It takes a little more to make a





And you said Hula Hoops would never come back in



FINAL FANTASY X-2

Put on your magic frock and get ready to take a trip back to Spira!

PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: FEBRUARY
WEBSITE: WWW.SQUARE-ENIX-USA.COM/GAMES/FFX-2/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

BACK STORY

The Final Fantasy games are almost a genre unto themselves. FFX-2 is actually the first proper sequel in the FF universe. That is, it continues the plot threads of the characters from FFX.



For ages now, almost as soon as the pleasant glow of *Final Fantasy X* wore off in fact, we've been hearing rumours about *Final Fantasy X-2*. Rumours flew thick and fast. Rumours like the

combat will no longer be turn based, this will be a platform game, this is Japan's answer to Lara Croft and you will team up with a wisecracking chipmunk named Trevor who defecates special treats that can be exchanged for Gil or eaten to gain magical powers. All these and more (well apart from the last one) flew into our inboxes and caused our big brained foreheads to crease with concern. Surely the first proper sequel to a *Final Fantasy* game would not mess with the formula so heinously? Surely those folks at Square Enix (formerly Squaresoft) wouldn't take something so beloved and taint it?

Well folks, it's finally here and those questions that have been baking our noodles can finally be answered. Is this a totally new direction in the FF pantheon? No. Will it freak out and perhaps even anger fans of FFX? Quite possibly. How's that then? Well read the following summary of the opening ten minutes of the game and see what you think.

FROM SUMMONER TO SUPERSTAR!

Remember the Blitzball Arena from FFX? Well, we start there. The crowd is cheering but it's not Blitzball they're watching. Oh no, it's Yuna, former High Summoner, doing her part as the Britney Spears of the *Final Fantasy*

universe. That's right Yuna is the singing, dancing sensation replete with backup singers, synchronised dancing and even floating guitar rockers. At this point the average gamer's jaw may be dropping in a mixture of shock and horror. Then we cut to Rikku (who is now dressed in clothes that would make Ms. Christina Aguilera blush) and a new character, Paine (who looks like the Goth ex girlfriend you'd like to pretend you never had).

Soon enough the player finds themselves facing Yuna in the first of many combat scenes. But why is Yuna the bad girl? What's the story here? What has happened since the somewhat esoteric ending of this game's prequel? Soon we find that this particular "Yuna" is not the real deal and things are not as they seem. But seriously, what's with the singing and dancing?

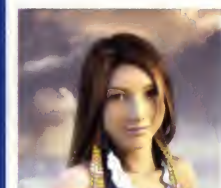
Has *Final Fantasy* been given a *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* makeover? Well, settle down. Things soon progress in a much more traditional FF mode afterwards but there still remains an edge of campy, *Sailor Moon*-esqueness that's either going to charm you or set your teeth on edge. It's unfortunate too because the lighter tone may stop people from seeing what a good game they have on their hands.

The point should be made from the outset: FFX-2 is a fine RPG; it's just that hardcore fans of the previous entry may find it a little light weight. For instance, remember Yuna's summoning of the Aeons in FFX? Well forget about it. Because these days, apart from appearing on FF MTV,



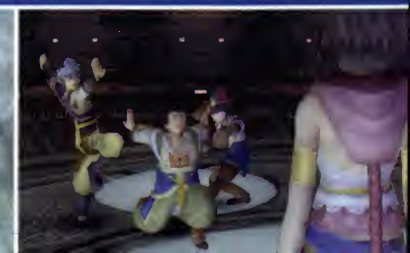
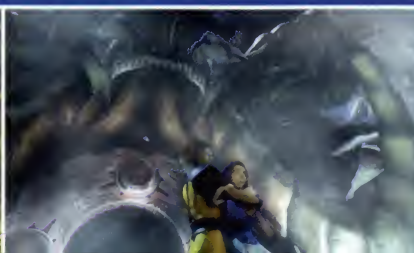
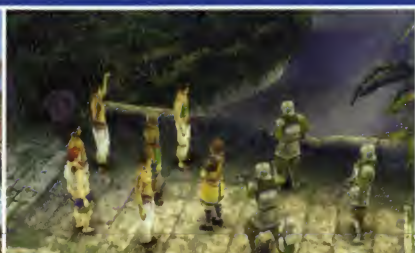
GIRLS GONE WILD!

Yuna, the somewhat dour High Summoner from FFX, has gone through a total change of outlook in this sequel. Now she sings, dances and even wields a gun. With her friends Rikku and Paine she is surely a force to be reckoned with, even sans Aeons.



	BETTER THAN:
	BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
	WORSE THAN:
	FINAL FANTASY X

	LAB TEST
	What they nailed this time:
	An RPG with exciting fast paced combat. Very tidy work indeed
	What they need to fix:
	The random encounters are back. Please Square Enix, no more



It takes a little more to make a



Accessories with white flame magic is so tricky



If only more baseball players looked this good



Yuna has the 'hots' for the monster on the left

STRANGE DAYS INDEED ...

Certainly *FFX-2* starts off very light and happy, but it's not long before things start to get dark. There are hints of a terrible secret beneath the earth and a return from a character we thought we'd never see again ...



Yuna is a Sphere hunter. What's a Sphere Hunter the more curious amongst you ask? Well, it's a person who seeks powers and wealth by hunting er... spheres.

These spheres (that you hunt) add to a new form of combat. It's not the overly complex puzzle of *FFX*, rather something new. This time you have to deal with Dresspheres. What that means is, basically, your powers are determined by the clothes you wear. Clothes may not make the man, but in *FFX-2* the clobber you wear certainly makes the woman. For instance, don the dress of a Black Mage and you'll have the powers of black magic (very much like Lulu from *FFX*), or perhaps you're more comfortable in the haberdashery of a Warrior, wielding a sword and smashing your enemies' defences.

If these two options sound all a little bit tough for you there's always the White Mage outfit (for healing of friends) and the Songstress outfit (for using the powers of the DANCE ASSASSIN!). If changing the outfits of a bunch of girls sounds somewhat light in the loafers to you, fear not because it ends up being a surprisingly sophisticated combat system. Certainly it lacks some of the finesse of *FFX*, but using the various different "Dressphere grids" for various different battles ends up being just as tactical as changing characters from the previous game.

SISTERS ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

Down to brass tacks, however, *X-2* is mostly about combat. You'll be spending the majority of your time building up your characters, fighting enemies, exploring, fighting yet more enemies then building up your characters some more. The combat system in *FFX-2* is possibly the sequel's biggest change. The entire engine has been revamped and the somewhat slow, turn-based combat of the *Final Fantasies* gone by is but a dim memory. For instance, in *FFX* when it was your character's turn to attack you could sit there, stroke your chin, and really have a good think about what you were going to do next. This time around that luxury does not exist. Go and

make yourself a cup of tea (as you could do in *FFX*) and you'll soon find yourself staring at a "Game Over" screen.

The combat in *FFX-2* is hectic and fast paced. Miss a turn and it's tough luck, you'll need to be on the ball and take your attacks whenever you can get them. Further to that if you manage to synchronise the attacks of your characters you can get the girls to pull off some impressive chain combos. This increases the damage you deal to your foes and also gives the fighting a sense of semi real time. This addition to the game has both good points and bad. On the one hand the combat feels much more fluid and less like the screen equivalent of sitting with a pad, pencil and many sided dice.

On the other hand due to the speed of the battles the whole situation can feel a little haphazard and fights may slip by you before you even have a chance to react. Thankfully in the Configuration menu you can increase or decrease the pace of the fights, but even on the slowest setting you'll want to keep your girls moving.

YOU CAN GO YOUR OWN WAY...

Another big change in *X-2* is the amount of freedom you are given right from the outset. *X-2* really has been given a dose of the *Grand Theft Auto* magic. In the last *Fantasy* you may remember when you got access to an airship and essentially could travel to any part of Spira. Well this time you've got an access all areas pass on a Sphere Hunting airship, The Celsius, from the get go. This means you can go anywhere you want. Certainly the game has a linear quality and the plot suggests where you should go next, but if you feel the urge to strike out on your own you are free to do so.

This kind of independent exploration can yield rewards both impressive and lame. You can find special dresspheres, better weapons and a whole host of side quests. These quests are a lot more defined than *Fantasy* fans may be used to. When any mission, be it plot-based or just for kicks, is activated the screen goes all *Terminator* and the words "Mission Time" flash up.



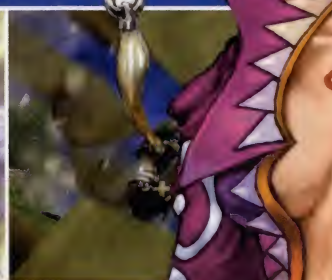
Yuna discovers the ugly side of Colonel Sanders

DRESS FOR SUCCESS.

Less fiddly than the FFX grid and much weirder is the dressphere system. A simple change of outfit can totally change your character. Go from heat packing vixen to white witch in one easy move. Not quite as spectacular as Yuna's Aeons, but still pretty cool to look at.



You should have seen the tattoo she wanted to get



Missions are clearly defined and well explained, leading to a lot less pointless wandering than FFX had. Some RPG fans may feel slighted as exploration without a specific purpose is one of the great joys of the genre.

Graphically X-2 is almost exactly the same as its predecessor. In fact, a lot of the monsters and background areas are reused (admittedly some of them have been significantly altered). There aren't quite as many FMV sequences as the last game but when they do occur they're just as spectacular as before.

A nice touch this time around is that you can skip some of the longer dialogue scenes which reduces the frustration of repeat battles greatly (and make no mistake, despite the jaunty new tone, FFX-2 has some truly tough and gruelling combat sequences). The sound, replete with tacky music and slightly wooden voice acting, is actually slightly better than before (with the actress who plays Yuna doing a very decent job).

The gameplay, like the prequel, is a little awkward and hard to control at times, yet ironically in a totally different way. The dressphere system is effective but it takes a while to get used to, and despite the ability to change outfits mid-battle some of the bigger boss encounters tend to be decided by whether you happen to be wearing the right togs for the right fight.

One slightly unwelcome addition to the mix is Yuna's ability to jump and climb. This may sound okay in theory, and admittedly it does break up the somewhat tedious pottering about of the last game, but the mechanics of the thing just don't quite work. Often you'll find yourself frustrated with the somewhat unsophisticated "mash-square-button-to-jump-and-climb" controls. *Prince of Persia* this is not.

A SEQUEL OR AN EQUAL?

Ultimately FFX-2 is a game that is going to prove very divisive for a lot of players. Those gamers who slogged through FFX for 70+ hours may feel a bit miffed at the new game's total about face in tone. Sure there are

plenty of big monsters and creepy scenes but any game where you literally use dance as a weapon is hardly going to have as deep an emotional impact as the somewhat bittersweet predecessor. That said, the new fighting dynamic feels streamlined and adds a real sense of urgency to the proceedings.

The plot may not have the epic tone of Yuna's battle against Sin but nor is it a Spice Girls adventure. If you can look past the overwhelming kookiness and Japanese nutbaggery you'll find yourself with a very solid RPG that looks great, plays very well and offers all sorts of unexpected treats. FFX-2 is a worthy sequel and a courageously different title in its own right. It has its flaws and it's not a world changer like FFX, but anyone willing to get lost in Spira once again will not be disappointed. **A** Anthony O'Connor

OFFICIAL VERDICT

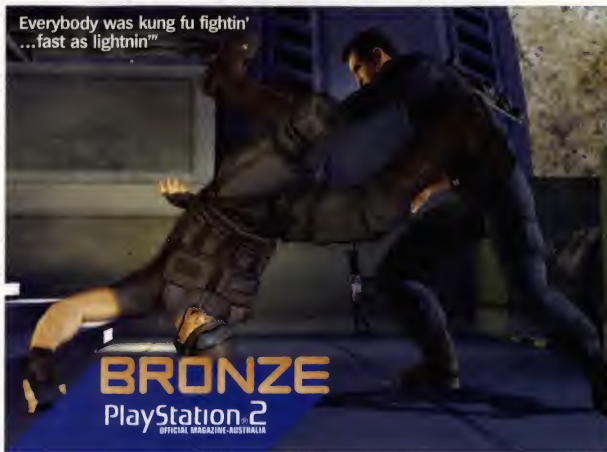
Graphics	09	Just as good as FFX. Very pretty indeed
Sound	09	Improved voice acting with typically chirpy music
Gameplay	08	Slightly awkward but very solid RPG goodness
Life span	08	Not quite as huge as FFX but with loads of quests

FFX-2 is a huge, sprawling RPG adventure that is well worth the attention of even the most casual fan.

09



JAMES BOND: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING



JAMES BOND: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

Making a third-person Bond game work – Mission: Impossible?

PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: EA
PRICE: \$89.95
PLAYERS: 1-4
OUT: FEBRUARY
WEBSITE:
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: YES
SURROUND SOUND: YES
ONLINE: TDC

BACK STORY

After appearing on almost every games console ever made, Bond straps on his M16-issue boxers for his third PS2 instalment. Discarding the usual first-person view has allowed the designers to create a game that plays more like a Bond movie than any of its prequels.

BETTER THAN:
MAX PAYNE 2
WORSE THAN:
SPLINTER CELL

LAB TEST
What they nailed this time:
The feel of the Bond films
What they need to fix:
The weak combat and inconsistent action

After hearing one too many "not as good as *GoldenEye*" comments, EA gave its development team a Licence to Kill the usual FPS template in favour of changing the game to a third-person action title. But like replacing Bond actors in the film series, making such a radical departure is a risky move. For every Sean Connery, there's always a Timothy Dalton just waiting to send audiences packing.

The appeal of using the third-person perspective is obvious. You get to SEE Bond shooting the baddies, you get to SEE Bond using his nifty Q-Gadgets and you get to SEE Bond wooing the ladies. What's the point of writing Pierce Brosnan one of those novelty cheques with a stupid number of zeros on it if his appearance and voice are only used in a handful of cut-scenes?

DOING IT HOLLYWOOD-STYLE

The game's main strength is in its ability to recreate the style of the *Bond* flicks. The plot sees Bond tracking Nikolai Diavolo, another mad billionaire who's scheming to bring the world to its knees with an army of Nano-Bots (microscopic robots) that can chew through metal faster than you can say "Where did all those bugs come from?" And to the game's credit, it is able to effortlessly switch from on-foot action to a variety of vehicles whenever the plot demands it.

One of many *Bond*-ing moments you'll have with

the game sees 007 sneaking into a hotel, evading security cameras, laser sensors and patrolling guards as he tracks down a pro race driver staying in one of the rooms. After nicking his gear, the next level sees Bond adopting his identity and competing in a local rally race. Coming first in the race is essential because Nikolai always invites the winner over to his Columbian castle to celebrate. When you're racing along the track, dodging barrels of napalm (that's how they do it in Columbia, apparently) and jostling for first place, you really will feel like a secret agent on the case.

Other noteworthy Bond moments include having machine gun firefights with henchmen while rappelling down the front of an exploding building, sliding your motorcycle sideways to get under a tanker truck and using an EMP grenade packed into a dollar coin to disable the electronics in a giant drill – a split-second before it gives 007 a lobotomy.


As you would expect the biggest impact the change to third-person action has had on the gameplay is in the shooting department. The loss of the first-person view means precision aiming and intuitive strafing are missing in action, but the new perspective allows you to use cover and hand-to-hand combat much easier.

The on-foot missions now play a lot like *Metal Gear Solid 2*. Bond can use a wall as cover, then lock his target icon onto an enemy and pop out for a couple of shots before ducking back around the corner. Walst-


ON YOUR BIKE

To mix the action up, Bond gets crazy in a whole variety of vehicles this time around. Making a mess of Jaw's truck with a motorcycle that packs rockets and a flamethrower, dodging through canyons in a helicopter and taking on half of the Russian army in a super-powered tank are just a few of the highlights. One of our favourite vehicle sections was ironically the weapons-free rally racing section, during which you tear it up through a mountain village. Taking it up a notch is another level that sees you dodging missiles as your drive Bond's sports car like a madman to try and catch a speeding train before it disappears with a shipment of stolen weapons.

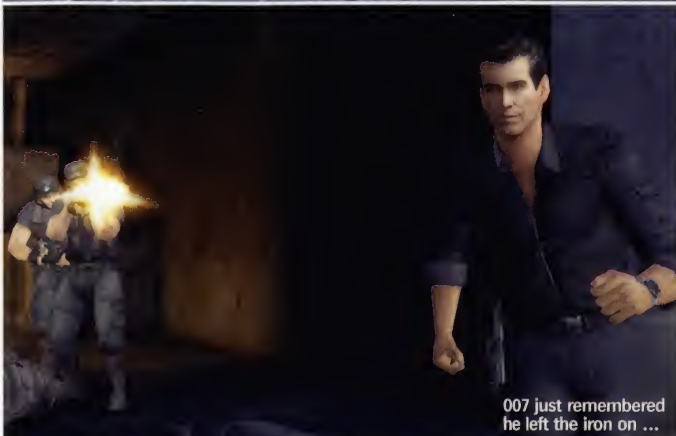





Will this be the first breakthrough-smash for Bond games since *GoldenEye*?



Someone will soon be swimming with the fishes. There is plenty of variation in the levels and they'll keep you busy for about a week.



007 just remembered he left the iron on ...



The game is now played in third-person

STAR QUALITY

To ensure the game absolutely drips with James Bond flavour, EA sent its Hollywood scouts out with fat cheque books and signed up all of the regular cast of the movies, as well as plenty of new stars.



PIERCE BROSNAN

Brosnan, Pierce Brosnan lends his million dollar features to his second PS2 Bond game.



SHANNON ELIZABETH

Disappointingly she doesn't get her kit off *American Pie*-style but she still looks plenty saucy playing Serena Germaine.



RICHARD KIEL

After kicking ass in *Happy Gilmore*, Jaws sinks his teeth back into the role that made him famous.



HEIDI KLUM

World famous super hottie Heidi plays the double crossing, backstabbing Katya Nadeanova.

high crates (which are conveniently scattered through most corridors) can also be used for cover during shootouts. Adding to his duck and cover skills, 007 can also perform a dive roll to help him move between crates. There's no doubt that ducking out of the way and then seeing a volley of bullets smash into the wall you're hiding behind looks fantastic, but when 95 per cent of the game's enemies are tackled from behind cover, you can't help wishing for a little more variety.

Whenever a Kamakazi enemy decides to charge your cover it's time for a little fist-in-face action. As well as the usual range of punches, Bond can grab enemies and knock them out by smashing their heads against any nearby walls or crates. To really humiliate your enemies, though, it's best to kill them by picking up nearby items like bottles or crowbars giving them a good, hard, baby seal-style clubbing.

The new combat moves are a welcome addition to the series but they aren't anything we haven't seen before. It would have been nice if EA had come up with some new moves, but failing that it should have at least copied the rest of Solid Snake's moves, like making guards surrender, taking hostages and being able to disguise yourself with their uniforms. And while we're complaining, please teach Bond to climb, jump or otherwise get the hell over waist-high boxes and fences next time.

SON OF A GUN

He may not be able to climb his way out of a paper bag but Bond sure knows how to handle his high-tech weapons and gadgets. On the wussy end of things, Bond has his tranquilliser gun and standard issue pistol. Better weapons, like the Desert Eagle (that kills with one shot), the shotgun and a couple of different machine guns can be stolen from fallen foes. For more tactical kills you should rely on sniper rifles and flash

grenades that stun any nearby enemies.

There aren't a lot of tricky gadgets in the game but the few there are work well. Thermal vision can be used in any dark areas to spot enemies and Bond always carries a grappling hook gun that can be used to climb up specific walls. By far the coolest gadget is a robotic spider that can be sent through tight spots like air conditioning ducts to get to hard to reach enemies or obstacles, then deal with them by detonating an explosive charge.

One very welcome return to the series is the boss fights with Bond villains. Early on you will find yourself throwing punches at Jaws while trying to avoid the metal pillars he pulls out of the ground and tosses at you. Another great encounter sees you trying to save your latest love Interest from being dragged into a furnace during a gun battle with Nikolai's right hand man.

As well as the droves of gun toting henchmen, each mission challenges you with a few objectives to complete. Some are as simple as finding the right key to unlock a door, but most see you sabotaging important machinery or slipping into buildings undetected. Normally these objectives work well to keep the flow of the action moving well, but some simply aren't logical enough.

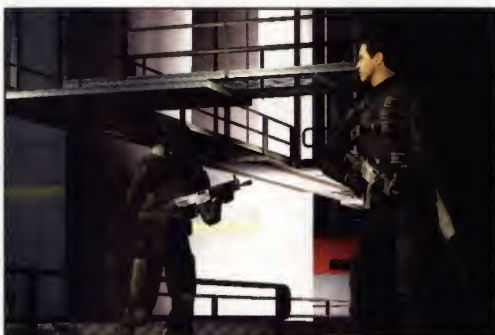
After killing all of the enemies in one level we couldn't figure out how to unlock the last gate. There wasn't a key or a switch to be found anywhere. It was only after half an hour of aimless stumbling about that we discovered the secret. In one of the darkened buildings (that you could only make out murky shapes in with your thermal vision) we found an unlocked window that led out onto a balcony. Equipping a sniper rifle here made it possible to zoom in and shoot the gate switch. Of course, this switch couldn't be seen from anywhere else in the level and there was



The developers have genuinely nailed the feel of the Bond movies – better than any previous Bond game. Ever.



The scuba diver's years practising with his harpoon gun finally paid off

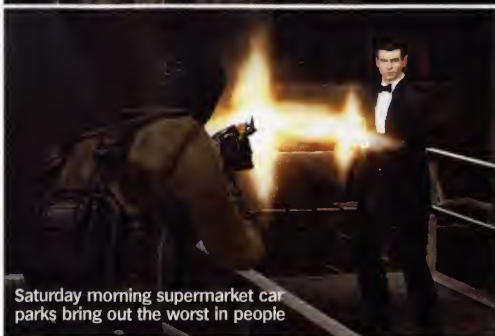


no clue that this elaborate sniping was necessary.

Another, admittedly minor, frustration lies in the game's overly-scripted nature. When we first got our hands on the explosive spider robot, we sent it ahead into the next area, looking for someone to blow up. We searched around 100 square metres of Aztec ruins but there wasn't anything in sight. However, as soon as we wandered around the corner as Bond, 20 gun crazy thugs had suddenly blinked into existence amongst the ruins. The scripted nature of the events don't put too much of a damper on the game but it does make you feel like you're in your own little version of *The Truman Show*.

The game's visuals are a bit of a mixed bag. Some of the levels, like the graveyard, pack huge landscapes onto the screen and look great, but the textures are on the bland side of ugly and most environments are lacking in detail. The outdoor sections look fine but whenever the action gets claustrophobic it's not pretty. On the up side, the main characters look stunning. Everything from Pierce Brosnan's smug grin to Shannon Elizabeth's ample bosom is bursting with photo-realism.

EA's third-person experiment ends up being the Roger Moore of the series. It's got plenty of charm and it gets the job done, but it can't match the skills of better agents like Pierce "*Splinter Cell*" Brosnan or Sean "*Metal Gear Solid*" Connery. **A** Narayan Pattison



Saturday morning supermarket car parks bring out the worst in people



Fire Safety 101: The only course Bond managed to flunk



OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Digitised Shannon Elizabeth – what's not to like?
Sound	09	Full THX surround sound will shatter nearby windows
Gameplay	07	Enjoyable but a little lightweight
Life span	07	23 missions will keep you happy for a week or two

Looks and plays just like the films. Maybe a little too "*Metal Gear Solid-Lite*" but it's perfect popcorn action.

08



MAXIMO VS ARMY OF ZIN

Slip into the love-heart print jocks of a hero. Ooooh ... satin

PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: FEBRUARY
WEB SITE:
[HTTP://WWW.CAPCOM.COM/MAXIMO2/](http://www.capcom.com/maximo2/)
60HZ MODE: YES
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

■ BACK STORY

Maximo is the 128-bit, 3D incarnation of Capcom's classic Ghosts 'n' Goblins series, set in a medieval world where supernatural powers hold sway. The original Maximo was renowned just as much for its gameplay as it was for its ball-tearing difficulty. Maximo Vs Army of Zin continues to follow the tale of the brave knight's search for his loved one.



Still unable to find his ladylove Sophia, Maximo has spent eight long months scouring the land without the slightest trace of her. One evening, amongst obvious unrest, panicked villagers appeal to Maximo for help. It soon becomes apparent that someone has unearthed the clockwork abominations, the Zin, from the Great Vault of Hawkmoor, where they have been sealed for five hundred years and is using them for dastardly deeds. Sensing that this may have something to do with Sophia's disappearance, Maximo sets off to defend the people against the mechanical assault.

The story of *Army of Zin* unfolds through extensive use of cut-scenes, using both in-game visuals and pre-rendered clips. Through excellent directorial technique, animation, facial expressions and top-notch character design, *Army of Zin* feels like a complete tale and you'll find yourself lost in the magic of it all. You'll soon start reminiscing about nostalgic memories of standing among headstones in just your boxers. The quality voice acting and cello-heavy symphony soundtrack that simmers in the background seals the deal.

On his journey, Maximo encounters both friend and foe. Beside the obvious soulstone powered Zin and

their variants that you need to dispatch, you'll come up against ghostly highwaymen, possessed scarecrows, evil subterranean bugs and even killer demon bunny rabbits. It's good to see that the developers have taken a step away from the clichéd zombies and skeletons, and yet still produce a cast of foes that are not only interesting, but varied.

While fighting off the Zin onslaught, you'll need to come to the rescue of the local populace. Whether you're saving panicked peasants, maidens in distress or battle weary warriors, your efforts will not go unrewarded. Relieved rescuees cough up gold, items or armour as a sign of their thanks, and saved merchants and veteran soldiers allow you to spend your gold to purchase powerful enhancements to further the cause. Saving the villagers serves several purposes – to show the evil nature of the Zin, to remind you that you are fighting the good fight and lastly, to motivate you on your quest. Fail to rescue the innocents and you'll lose out on the reward and you'll also have to bear their deaths on your conscience.

Army of Zin provides a good variation of environments and times of day, that give you a genuine feel for the passage of time. Your journey

	BETTER THAN:
	MAXIMO
	WORSE THAN:
	JAK II: RENEGADE

	LAB TEST
	What they nailed this time:
	New combo system = sweet battles
	What they need to fix:
	Gold armour, yet no magic. What's up with that?



I AM DEATH INCARNATE! NO, REALLY...

Maximo can harness the power of the freed souls and transform into Grim, the Angel of Death, for a brief period of time. Taking advantage of Grim's immortality, you are completely immune to enemy attacks and can carve through large groups of foes with his lethal scythe.



Sure, it's a big hammer, but the real weapon is in his shorts, ladies... [wink]...





"How dare you compliment me on my underpants?!" THWACK!



If you slip off the edge you can stick your sword in to prevent you from falling



"I thought you said Army of Sin. I was expecting way more shoplifting and wife-swapping!"



Nude fencing – not quite the same as jelly wrestling but still pretty hot



doesn't encounter the usual formulaic 'throw in a snow level, and maybe a beach' that we've seen so many times before. The levels blend together a balanced proportion of combat and platforming while managing to still secret away a tonne of hidden chests, to keep you coming back to find them all. Checkpoints are more liberally scattered around the level than in the previous game, so you won't be smashing your controller in a fit of rage.

During his absence, it appears as though Maximo has been polishing up his swordplay because what was previously a small group of attacks has blossomed into a wide array of techniques. Combining light and heavy hits with a dash of timing, some frantic button pressing and controller movements, you can wreak all manner of pain on the Zin. Your new attack methods cater to the situations you'll face in combat, like simple strings of hits, clearout moves to repel multiple enemies, air combos or focussed attacks on a single foe. Mastery of combos is actively encouraged, as defeating foes with long string combos yield more treasure, meaning more powerful armaments sooner. To compliment Maximo's usual broadsword he can also heft a massive warhammer, which is not only useful for smashing Zin into scrap metal, but also for solving puzzles.

Add to this a bevy of other new weapons, a number of powerful attacks that can be purchased from merchants and defensive rolls and you've got a lot of variety in combat. Maximo's usual shield-frisbee jiggery-pokery returns, allowing for defensive and offensive uses, but also the ability to draw in treasure from a distance, trigger remote switches and distract enemies from their foul purpose. Even the brave knight's choice of boxer shorts has an impact on gameplay, besides avoiding mid-battle wedgies.

The action is viewed from a somewhat distant twenty-five degree angle. While it makes platform to platform jumps a breeze, the oblique perspective does add an element of tension and makes some of the longer leaps required feel like you won't quite get there. While you can move the camera freely left and right, you can't modify its vertical tilt. When you get close to walls, the camera will tilt down. This means you can see where you're jumping to, which is fine, but it can get a bit claustrophobic too. Sometimes it would have been nice to be able to look up to better survey your surroundings, but it's no biggie, really.

When compared to Maximo's previous outing, *Army of Zin* is not only more visually impressive, but it's also more cohesive, more engrossing, more involved and more accessible – that is, everything a sequel should be. The difficulty ramps up nicely as the game progresses, and those that desire the frustration-laced challenges of the original have a hard difficulty setting to select. The new combos and focus on storyline bode well for another sequel, and if Capcom keep coming up with the goods like *Army of Zin* again, we'll be glad to have it. Fans of *Ghosts to Glory* already know they have to have this game, and it's well worth the dosh for everyone else too. **A Nick O'Shea**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Gothic design draws you into the medieval world
Sound	08	Orchestral tracks accompany the crack of the lash
Gameplay	08	Light controls and a finely crafted combo system
Life span	08	Questing for rare items keeps you going for a while

Much more accessible than *Ghosts to Glory* and with an even more engaging plot.



KILL.SWITCH

TPS? FPS?
OR MAYBE A
DELIGHTFUL MIX
OF THE TWO?

Just like MGS2, when things get a little hectic or you just need to take aim with a little more finesse than the third person view – *kill.switch* gives you the option of switching instantly to FPS mode. What's that all mean? It means sniper style shooting with an AK-47! Yeah baby!



Enemies are also quick to seek cover



"Don't shoot! I haven't found a crate to hide behind yet!"

The no-look grenade lob – who cares where it goes as long as it blows up?



Why's it called *kill.switch*? We've got no idea ...

KILL.SWITCH

"Hey, what's that behind that obscurely placed box...? ARGH!"

PUBLISHER: SONY
DEVELOPER: NAMCO
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
WEB SITE: WWW.KILLSWITCH.COM/GAMEINFO/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

BACK STORY

Namco is best known for its Time Crisis trilogy, the gun game where you take cover, pop out from behind the cover and shoot a bunch of baddies. Now they bring us *kill.switch*; a TPS where you take cover, pop out from behind the cover and shoot a bunch of baddies. Hey, if it ain't broke...



A cursory glance at the pretty screenshots may lead you to believe that *kill.switch* is yet another entry in the increasingly large sub-genre of third-person, military-themed, stealth games. All the elements are there: a militarily garbed lead character armed to the teeth, war torn cities and burnt out buildings, stuff blowing up but above all, a whole cadre of terrorists and other assorted ruffians.

It's true also that from the visuals alone one gets more than just a whiff of *Splinter Cell* and *MGS2*. Strangely though the piccies and the package are very different. Very much like those "men's magazines" that promise nude pictures of Anna Kournikova only to deliver blurry shots of some random blonde woman photographed so badly it may as well be Pauline Hanson in a tennis outfit, *kill.switch* is a bit of a surprise. Unlike the aforementioned magazines, however, this surprise is mostly a good one.

STEALTH SMEALTH!

For a start, forget any notion of stealth. *kill.switch* is to the stealth game what *Home and Away* is to anything vaguely watchable; i.e.: the polar opposite. Try to pull some subtle Solid Snake moves in this title and you'll soon find

yourself bleeding in the gutter like a seal pup after a solid clubbing. If anything, the game harkens back to PSome run and

gun titles like *Syphon Filter*. You can try to skulk in the shadows all you like but you'll end up feeling pretty silly when a motley bunch of fanatics snigger, nudge one another, make derogatory statements about your pants then fill you full of lead. That's the bad news.

The good news is you've got more guns than Charlton Heston's basement, a variety of grenades and a neat control system that is simple and slick. Your character moves quickly, can commando roll and, best of all, can use pretty much anything as cover. We've seen many a game where you can nip behind a crate or barrel (if only these evil dictators would keep their fortresses clean!) but in *kill.switch* the whole thing's taken to another level.

CRATE EXPECTATIONS

Press **LB** when near a wall, crate, box, car or pretty much anything that isn't an enemy soldier and you'll duck behind said object. You can then creep to the side of the object and, using a rather neat "shooting around corners" manoeuvre, take out numerous enemies from the comfort and safety of an obscurely placed box. Occasionally this shooting from cover can get tricky as your crosshairs seem to have a mind of their own. Not a problem. Simply switch to first person view and swiftly snipe those scamps with style.

This is an atypical amount of depth for a "duck and cover" move but it doesn't end there. You can also

BETTER THAN:
OPERATION WINBACK
WORSE THAN:
SPLINTER CELL

LAB TEST
What they nailed this time:
The nice and smooth control system and sense of fast paced shooting thrills
What they need to fix:
Better level design and more depth, please



**YOU'VE GOT MORE
GUNS THAN CHARLTON
HESTON'S BASEMENT**



Lucky these brittle wooden crates are impenetrable to machine gun fire ...



Grenades are one of the most enjoyable aspects of *kill.switch*



Hiding – sure, it keeps you alive but it's just plain wimpy ...



Using railings for cover is not such a bright idea ...



"Blindfire"; basically popping your gun over the top of your hidey hole and shooting wildly. The fact that this rarely results in a kill doesn't detract from the fact it a) looks cool and b) freaks out the enemy soldiers.

It's not just guns that can be used from behind stuff, either. You have at your disposal various types of grenades. Now, we're all used to the "throw ... pause ... BOOM!" variety but much more interesting are the flash grenades. A well aimed flashy thrown into a swaggering horde of hostiles will leave them staggering around, blindly firing their weapons and falling all over themselves. This then presents an ideal opportunity to run up and pop many caps in their arses.

While a shallow shooter is fun for a while, choosing between running in and firing blindly or rolling from box to box does not a layered strategy game make. Another disappointing aspect of the game is the way the plot unfolds. There's actually a rather intriguing premise that scoots along the subtext of *kill.switch*. If you listen to the dialogue carefully you'll realise you're not playing as the soldier. Rather you're taking on the role of a nefarious (and unseen) evil force that is using the soldier (via sinister mind control technology) to start conflicts in volatile areas of the world and perhaps even begin WWII. Unfortunately this potentially rich idea is superficially touched on at best and tends to be more confusing than compelling.

Graphically the game's nothing to write to mum about,

either. Sure, the models look fine and there's nice death animations but there's no blood, bland background textures and very little variety in the enemy models.

Even the explosions are little underwhelming – kind of like the low tech cheapies seen in Chuck Norris movies from the '80s. Also the level design is weak. Basically your goal is to blast your way through to the end of the level, perhaps planting some C4 or flicking a switch along the way, and then doing a similar thing in a different location.

What saves *kill.switch* is the sheer fun factor. For some reason, perhaps due to the current dearth of slow, tense stealth games, running through levels, blasting wildly at baddies, rolling about and shooting from behind cover is sheer joy. Not long lasting joy (the game is pretty short) but a good time nonetheless. Fans of mindless action should sign up immediately. **Anthony O'Connor**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	07	Solid models, slick animation, bland backgrounds
Sound	07	Solid sound effects with some nice enemy dialogue
Gameplay	08	Lots of fast paced fun for fans of gun toting action
Life span	05	Tough(ish) but not very long and no replay value

As third person shooters go, it's quite a lot of fun. Just don't go in expecting the next *Splinter Cell*.

07

DUCK AND COVER!

Namco call it the "Offensive Cover System", we call it "Hiding behind stuff bits" but either way it's an effective and fun way of taking out your foes without losing the top half of your skull. You've gotta wonder who left all those crates, barrels and boxes lying around though ...





MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

If you're gonna do something, do it in style

	BETTER THAN:
	MAX PAYNE
	WORSE THAN:
	HITMAN 2

	LAB TEST
	What they nailed this time:
	The tweaked "Bullet Time", slow-mo action is even more entertaining
	What they need to fix:
	Appallingly long and far too frequent loading times along with terrible jerkiness

PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR
DEVELOPER: REMEDY
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.ROCKSTAR GAMES.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO

BACK STORY

The original Max Payne was a huge hit on PC and quickly made the move to PS2. Following gritty New York cop Max Payne as he sets out to avenge the murder of his wife and child, it pioneered "Bullet Time" whereby the action can be slowed down in a spectacular fashion.



That boy Max certainly has style. This game is awash with visual treats that can't fail to impress. Yes, the "Bullet Time" slow-mo shenanigans are back in new and improved splendour along with a hard-boiled tale that puts other gaming Hollywood wannabes to shame. Rather than opt for the industry standard CG interludes, *Max Payne 2* fleshes out the story with a dark, flick book comic style that reeks of class. In a nod to Mr Tarantino, it's a tale that switches between the past, present and future, *Pulp Fiction*-style, offering the player confused snippets of a film noir love story that simply urges you to play on in order to discover what the hell went wrong.

When it comes to the action it's all about Mr John Woo. Men with guns in both hands and diving through the air in slow motion with the grace of a gymnast. Bullets pierce the air in all directions, shells tinkle slowly to the floor and punctured torsos get thrown violently backwards in a fatal, slow moving arc of spraying blood and flailing limbs. The gunfights are almost poetic in their execution and it's all down to the wonder of "Bullet Time", which slows down the action for a limited period enabling you to pick off your assailants more easily.

Hit the "shootdodge" button and you can soar sideways through the air blazing away at your hapless victims and culminating in a slide across the floor rather than immediately standing upright to be assaulted by a hail of lead. "Bullet Time" has also altered slightly with successful shooting getting you more into the zone and

gradually slowing things down to an even greater extent.

Nevertheless, we still have our reservations about "Bullet Time". The novelty can wear off after a while and what you're left with is a seriously linear romp through shootout after shootout. Would John Woo films be half as enjoyable if it was just one long bullet ballet gunfight? We need the breaks to build up our desire for another shootout and to keep us wanting more without overdosing on action. *Max Payne 2* fails in this respect and can end up feeling like a bit of a one trick pony.

However, the game's biggest failing is its appalling conversion from PC to PS2. With a very heavy whiff of "rush job" about it, *Max Payne 2* is a jerky, stuttering disappointment with huge and frequent loading times that really spoil the flow of the game. It's a massive blunder that has you sitting there waiting and waiting to get back into the action and makes playing the game as much of a chore as it is satisfyingly enjoyable. **A Mikey Foley**



OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	06	Workmanlike but far too jerky
Sound	08	Professional Hollywood storytelling
Gameplay	07	Gunplay to make John Woo proud
Life span	05	Once again far too short

Horrendously long loading times and jerkiness spoil some of the best shootouts gaming has to offer.

07

Rage. It's not just a music program

"I'll make you eat that pyjama remark!"

"You're no match for my pelvic-thrust of fury!"

Not even the strongest piles cream could ease these red rings

I-NINJA

So cute, so cuddly, so DAMN DEADLY with a ninja sword!!! Wa-haaaaa!!

BETTER THAN:
RAYMAN 3
WORSE THAN:
RATCHET & CLANK 2

LAB TEST
What they nailed this time:
The main character, I-Ninja is a comic executioner
What they need to fix:
Where's the multiplayer? I-Ninja screams for it

PUBLISHER: SONY
DEVELOPER: NAMCO
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEB SITE: WWW.NAMCO.CO
M/GAMES/I-NINJA
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: YES
SURROUND SOUND: YES

BACK STORY

In 1993 Argonaut Games created the first major 3D game for a home console with their boundary-crossing SNES title, *Star Wing*. Its recent PS2 titles however have been less than stellar, including the disappointing *SWAT: Global Strike Team* and the plain nasty *Blonicle: The Game*.



Imagine if Super Mario had grown up in the Far East, back in the days when testing the hacking potential of your sword on random passers-by was considered good sport, and men wore nothing under their kimonos. If, instead of consuming happy mushrooms, he learnt from a wise old sensei the subtle art of slicing someone in two with a shuriken, he'd probably be *I-Ninja*. Yes sir, this is a platforming game with a splash of cut-gut ninja hacksawness and plenty of pizzazz to boot.

The reason why *I-Ninja* has been called into action is because a nasty old dictator named Master O-Dor and his army of Ranx have invaded I-Ninja's home world. After dispatching a few Ranx soldiers on his way to rescuing his sensei, I-Ninja touches a Rage Stone that brings out his psychotic blighter qualities and sees him unintentionally decapitating his just-rescued sensei. Thankfully the sensei proceeds to hover into an Obi-Wan-Kenobi-styled spirit form before telling you that to defeat O-Dor you'll have to collect all the Rage Stones scattered throughout the game's various levels.

The game world itself is split up into a series of locations that each act as hubs for four to five missions. You arrive at one of these locations, say a beach or jungle, and then hunt around for doors to go through and proceeding missions to accomplish. Your old sensei is always on hand to give you useful advice as to where you can and can't go. Each area hardly strives for that *National Geographic* sense of visual realism, instead opting for bright fruit-bowl colours and some occasional cel-shaded texture work.

In terms of looks the game is certainly angled towards cuteness, with *I-Ninja* and the entire army full of monkey-imitating Ranx patted into quaint little nuggets of polygonal dough. Of course cute and functional, which *I-Ninja*'s graphics are, does not mean eyeball-smackingly good, so don't expect the roof of the Sistine chapel when you load this baby up.

Thankfully *I-Ninja* is a fairly genial way to sift away your spare time; there's a lot of running, jumping and collecting coins, some *Super Monkey Ball*-inspired sequences that provide a few laughs and some novelty boss battles upon completing each world.

Unfortunately, the game's positives, as good as they are, do little to eviscerate the intimidating PS2 platforming competition. *I-Ninja* is not a perfect game. For one, there are many points in the game where you're forced to replay passed missions – a decidedly dull task. More importantly though, the game seems to try too hard, leaving its fingers in too many pies and so fails to conjure up a new and unique playing experience. **James Ellis**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	05	Not boggling, but cute enough for the kids
Sound	08	Phat tunes, along with some comical "hee-yah!"s
Gameplay	07	Solid, good variety but not challenging enough
Life span	05	Constantly entertaining without being engrossing

While *I-Ninja* is packed with varied gameplay its original elements are largely superfluous. Worth a rent.

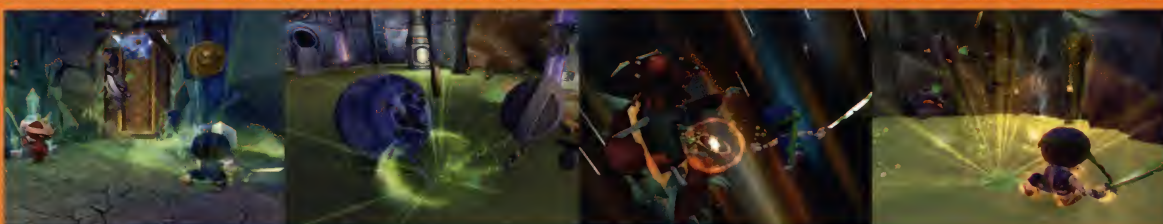
07

"Get away from me you bobbie-headed freaks!"



NINJA GONE NUTTY

As you slash, leap and swing your way through each mission you'll eventually build up your various special abilities. The first and most notable ability you get is to go as nutty as a scrotum and run around the place with your sword dicing Ranx into jelly croutons. Other powers include life regeneration and the ability to conjure up a super duper shuriken.

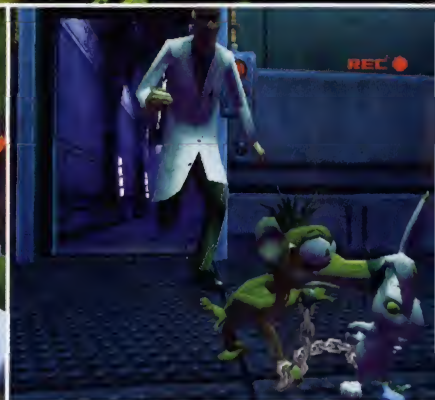




Introducing the most morbid couple in the history of gaming...



Some of the game's monsters need to ease up on their diets



WHIPLASH

Introducing the most bizarre chain-gang on the planet

PUBLISHER: ATARI
DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: FEBRUARY
WEBSITE: WWW.EIDOSINTERACTIVE.COM/GAMES
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES

BACK STORY

Developer Crystal Dynamics is probably best known for its work on Gex back on the PSone and the Legacy of Kain series. After the recent blood-sucking splatter fest of Legacy of Kain: Defiance, it has taken a more custard pie approach for the slapstick-heavy Whiplash.



They say you can't reinvent the wheel. They also say an apple a day keeps the doctor away, but we'll save that discussion for later.

What we do mean though, is that it's becoming a lot harder to come up with an entirely original platform game. Unless you only just got your PS2 stuffed in your Christmas stocking last year, you've probably sampled the odd platform adventure or two and not noticed much difference between them.

So what does a developer do in an overcrowded genre with King Jak ready to blast any would-be usurpers back from whence they came? Well, they chain two rodents together and let them loose inside an animal research centre. If you're wondering how much alcohol went into conceiving this, you're not alone.

NOT TESTED ON ANIMALS

Whiplash is the story of an unfortunate pair of laboratory animals; Spanx, a less than cunning weasel complete with electrodes in his skull and Redmond, a neurotic little white rabbit who feels no pain. The two were chained together and destined for the Genron Recombinator to become a single creature. After a bold escape and with a little help from the Genron super computer the pair intend to bring the suitably evil corporation and its equally evil CEO to its knees.

How do you do this? Smash everything you see, smash your way through the humans standing in your

way, and set all the animals free ... most likely by smashing something. Get the picture? So it's not brain surgery. Hell, it's not even ingrown nail surgery but it's fun while it lasts. Believe us, saving monkeys from getting shampoo squirted in their eyes can be satisfying.

Spanx and Redmond are certainly an odd couple. Spanx is the character you control and moves like any average platforming hero, dragging the helpless Redmond behind him. He can dash, double-jump and scurry up pipes and wires. He can even swing Redmond around like a helicopter and slowly glide to the floor but Rayman and Ratchet have both already been there. As a result, 'steep' is not a word one would associate with the learning curve in Whiplash. In a matter of minutes you'll be swinging that bunny around like you were born to do it.

So it sounds good and it feels good, but how does it look? Even though the gameplay is solid, the graphics are decidedly average and the lighting can be a little too dark at times. While Spanx and Redmond are convincing in a "Looney Tunes on steroids" kind of way, a little more graphical flair in the other characters wouldn't have gone astray.

There's a bunch of easy puzzles to solve and a few too many laser-ridden hallways to run down, looking suspiciously like an effort to make the game seem longer than it actually is. Don't expect an epic here, because Whiplash won't keep seasoned platformers in front of the TV for much longer than a weekend. If you've



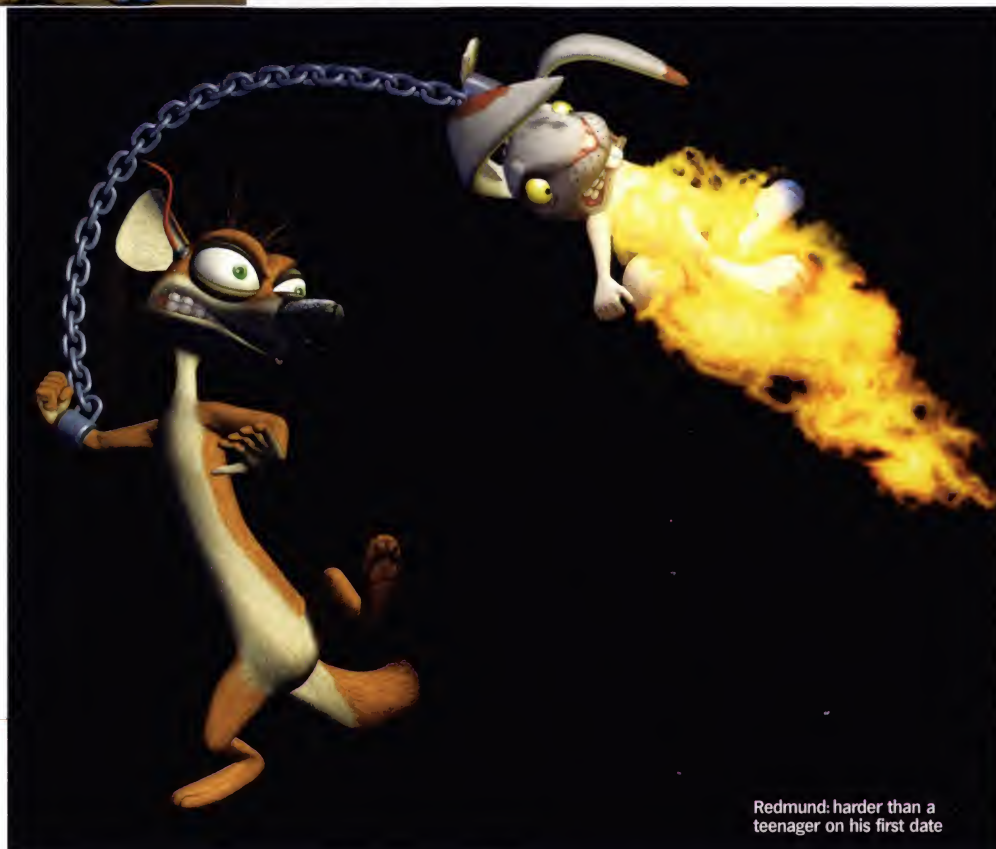
There's all kinds of humour, but mostly slapstick. Boiling!

	BETTER THAN:
	RAYMAN REVOLUTION
	WORSE THAN:
	JAK II: RENEGADE

	LAB TEST
	What they nailed this time:
	Torturing your floppy eared friend is too much fun
	What they need to fix:
	Spend more time on the graphics next time!



The graphics are decent but only average for what we expect nowadays from the PS2



Redmond: harder than a teenager on his first date

clocked *Jak II* you should have no problems wrapping *Whiplash* around your little finger. There always seems to be plenty of health packs around, you can save mid-level and Spanx and Redmond seem to be able to fall from massive heights without so much as a sprained ankle.

While the combat and rabbit hurling is fairly repetitive, it does provide some of the game's highlights. After a barrage of successful hits Redmond's status changes and he begins to go berserk, zipping about on his chain in a lightning quick blur, like William Shatner on a coffee bender. Redmond is a potent weapon, and unlockable combat combos provide a diversion from mashing the attack buttons, but once you've seen one fat security guard get hit upside the head with a rabbit you've seen them all. However, Redmond's major talent is the ability to take the punishment that Spanx continually dishes out. The stocky little bunny can be set ablaze, used to jam machinery or utilised as anything from a grappling hook to a helium balloon. A special meter keeps track of how much your damage is costing the company. This really does encourage the mindless destruction that keeps *Whiplash* ticking over.

PERSONALITY GOES A LONG WAY

Just as the perennially cool Samuel L. Jackson said in *Pulp Fiction*, personality does go a long way, and one thing that stands out in *Whiplash* is its sense of humour. There are a lot of genuinely hilarious moments that

make the average graphics and repetitive gameplay more forgivable. It is consistently enjoyable to see little Redmond suffer, whether he's being set on fire, dipped in chocolate, frozen in an ice cube or inflated with helium.

Remember to check out the 'Pro-long Life Preserver' to stave off death, the do-it-yourself surgery chair, or the 'Fattress', a mattress for the morbidly obese. Aside from the disappointing graphics, it's just the little things that prevent *Whiplash* from being essential platform fare. The voice acting is fairly well done, but the human opponents could've been given a little more variety in their speech. The gags come on thick and fast, but it's a crime we don't see the chicken cannon more often.

Whiplash is a fine premise marred by some poor execution. It's far from the car accident it could have been but it seems content to settle comfortably into the realm of average. **♣ Luke Reilly**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	05	Bright, then murky – but mostly half-assed
Sound	08	Generic effects, but funnier than average voice acting
Gameplay	07	Standard fare but a few unique touches beckon
Life span	05	Fun to be had but it's way too short

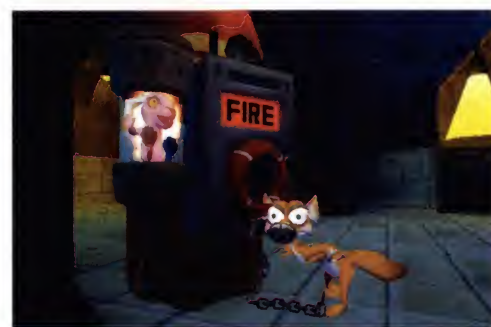
A great sense of humour and warped characters saves *Whiplash* and is easily the game's standout feature.

07

THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

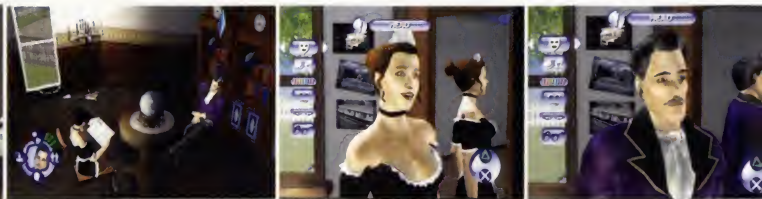


It seems every platform hero needs a sidekick these days. Ratchet has his Clank, Jak has his Dexter and ... well, Butch Cassidy has his Sundance Kid ... you know what we mean. But this has to be one of the most sadomasochistic relationships in the history of gaming. The comfort of his chained companion is not a high priority for Spanx and as such, Redmond will need to endure more punishment than a Backstreet Boy at a NOFX concert.





More pixelated nudity than you can poke a virtual stick at



	BETTER THAN:
	THE SIMS
	WORSE THAN:
	THE SIMS 2

	LAB TEST
	What they nailed this time:
	The story mode has a lot more stuff to do this time
	What they need to fix:
	Make the travelling more interactive (and fun!)

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

Bustin' out bigger than Anna Nicole Smith in a training bra ...

PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: MAXIS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.EAGAMES.COM
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
ONLINE: YES
PERIPHERALS: USB HEADSET

BACK STORY

The Sims is the highest selling PC game of all time. Seven expansion packs have been released for it including House Party, Hot Date and Superstar, along with a more comprehensive Deluxe edition. The Sims made their debut on the PS2 in 2002.



The Sims is certainly a unique phenomenon. Put bluntly it is a glorified Tamagotchi, and yet it still manages to captivate both hardcore and casual gamers. In 2002 the series made the jump from the safety of its PC origins into the relative unknown of the console format, and with great success. So it's not a huge surprise that the follow up, *Bustin' Out*, is now upon us ...

But wait – *The Sims Bustin' Out* is NOT *The Sims 2*. Sure, the graphics have received a touch-up, there's a whole bunch of new items, activities, paths and even online play (see Be an Online Pimp), but *Bustin' Out* does not redefine *The Sims* as we know it.

It does, however, make the whole experience much more friendly to the console format. In the previous game you have two main modes of gameplay; 'Bust Out', the objective-based story mode previously known as 'Get a Life', and of course the 'Free Play' sandbox mode that allows you to create your own 'hood. The story mode has been tweaked to play more smoothly; now you'll be prompted with hints on how to progress.

The name *Bustin' Out* refers to the fact that your Sims can now travel to other locations such as a neighbour's house or other exotic destinations such as a dance club or the nudist colony. Don't think that

you'll be cruising around the neighbourhood GTA-style though. The transport is entirely automated – you'll just get to watch your Sims getting from A to B.

Alas, you still have to earn a living, but fortunately the new careers are pretty diverse. Over the course of the game your Sims could be scrubbing toilets, modelling lingerie or living the excesses of a rock star. Your dwelling will also reflect your vocation. For example, athletes will be able to live in the Fitness Club.

Ultimately, it's still the same old *Sims*. You'll still be telling virtual people when to eat and use the loo, completing mundane tasks that you hate doing in real life and trying desperately to juggle your social life and career. **Tristan Ogilvie**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Slightly better than the previous game, not stunning
Sound	07	Funny sound effects, Improved background music
Gameplay	08	Still great fun for control freaks
Life span	09	Looks like you'll be playing til next year's edition

Bustin' Out is slicker but with the absence of any real gameplay enhancements. Not really a sequel.

08



BE AN ONLINE PIMP

Exclusive to the PS2 version of *Bustin' Out* is online play, which allows your Sims to befriend other people's Sims around the world. You can visit their houses, trade items with them and even communicate with them via the USB Headset. Sadly, the jittery framerate from the offline game gets even worse when once you get online. Still, it's an addition that Sims fans will no doubt welcome with open arms.



This was the only shot from the OPS2 Xmas party suitable for print



Larry found out the hard way why no one had ever set the Spa bath jets to 'Ludicrous speed'



PUBLISHER: RED ANT
DEVELOPER: DIGITAL BROS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

ENERGY AIRFORCE

It's Gran Turismo for flight jocks



Strap yourself into an F-16c. Spend Sunday afternoons polishing up your F-22a. Take your X-35c out for a blast. They don't quite have the same ring to them as a Porsche 911 or a Ferrari 355 but they're the cream of the winged world and just like *Gran Turismo* you can earn the right to pilot these bad boys.

The makers of this game better hope the CIA doesn't get its hands on a copy because after you've slogged your way through the pilot's licence tests you'll probably be qualified enough to take control of the real thing. It forces you to master everything from taxiing down the runway before takeoff to retracting your landing gear. This is one hell of a detailed sim, that makes absolutely no attempt to simplify things for our arcade pleasures.

And therein lies the problem with *Energy Airforce*. We all like to shoot things out of the sky but we don't want to be forced to go back to school to do it. *Ace Combat: Distant Thunder* managed to fool us into thinking we were flying the

real thing while still making the game immediately accessible and terrific fun.

Energy Airforce on the other hand, is hard work throughout. Authentic, detailed, comprehensive? Yes. Enjoyably entertaining? No. It can prove satisfying but only after a hell of a lot of hard work and mission failing heartache along the way. **✶ Mikey Foley**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	06	Lots of blue and reasonably pretty jets
Sound	06	The female tutorial voice sounds pretty fit
Gameplay	05	Infuriatingly tough. It is a game after all
Life span	07	Loads of missions and tests to complete

An admirable attempt at a serious flight-sim but if you want *Top Gun* thrills seek out *Ace Combat* instead.

06

HMV
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feature

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VIDEO

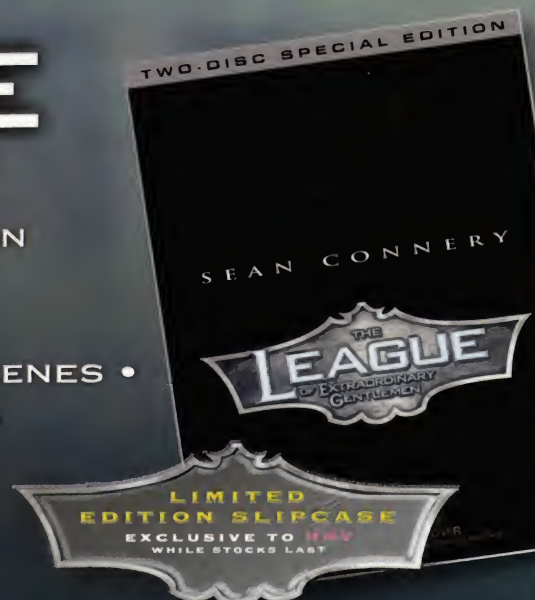
SEAN CONNERY

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MEGA MAN X7



2D, 3D, DD, we're not fussy ...



YOU'VE GOT THE POWER

The controls, as you might expect, are basic: **X**, **○**, **△**, and **□** are jump, dash, fight and charge respectively. The challenge is not in learning complicated button combos, but in earning upgrades and learning new abilities in order to blast through the levels and defeat the bosses.



"It feels like we've been standing here for a month!"



MEGA MAN X7

Mega Man: quickly becoming Monotonous Man

PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: FEBRUARY
WEBSITE: WWW.CAPCOM.CO
M/MEGAMAN/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

BACK STORY

Mega Man celebrates its 15th birthday in 2003. In 1987, Capcom brought to the NES a first in gaming history – a game in which you didn't have to complete the levels in any particular order. Since then, Mega Man has been a tool for trying out Capcom's newest innovations and ideas.



Mega Man has mostly been a 2D side-scroller for 15 years now. Opinion on whether or not this should change is divided. It's also moot. For its new title, *Mega Man X7*, Capcom is moving away from the traditional format and taking *Mega Man* into the realm of 3D. But fear not, avid fans – this is not a repeat of *Mega Man Legends*. Yes, the game does contain 3D elements but it still manages to retain the feel of *Mega Man* that you're used to.

In *Mega Man X7*, you play newcomer Axl – a young Reploid who has escaped from maverick bounty hunter faction Red Alert, right into the middle of a group run by, you guessed it, X. In a bid to join X's pacifist movement, Axl teams up with Zero and X to defeat the bloodthirsty Red Alert, who have wrought havoc on the entire world in an attempt to convince X to return the boy.

There have been several major developments. The first (and most noticeable) of these is the graphics. The characters and enemies are cel-shaded; in order to keep up with the times, we suppose; but it does add a nice touch to a game that otherwise seems quite mediocre. The settings are made up of polygons, nicely rendered to complement the guys running around in them.

Another nice feature is that now you can switch between characters in order to optimise your efficiency. With X, Zero and Axl at your disposal, you can choose the best character for hand-to-hand combat, jumping puzzles (blegh), or just generally running around wreaking havoc on bad-guy arse. However, this really only works in theory – most of the time you will find yourself using Axl or X exclusively, and only pulling out

Zero when you need to leap about like a monkey.

The gameplay itself is not so much 3D as 2D with a roaming camera. After a couple of introductory side-scrolling levels, the game rolls into the familiar stage-select format, where you can choose from a number of missions. While supposedly these move into the realm of 3D, they behave more like 2D setups. There is no exploring to be done – you move in a straight line, topping bad guys and rescuing Replids, moving as quickly as possible to avoid traps and damage. At times the camera will swing around to view the character from the back, making the game look more dimensional; but the gameplay heavily belies this.

It would seem that, in trying to both keep fans happy and keep up with the technological Joneses, Capcom has created a game that, ultimately, will make no-one deliriously happy. While *Mega Man X7* definitely has its moments, none of these are particularly earth-shattering. Perhaps one that only the most dedicated fans can appreciate. **Michelle Starr**

BETTER THAN:
BATMAN: VENGEANCE
WORSE THAN:
ZONE OF ENDERS

LAB TEST
What they nailed this time:
The cel-shaded animation seen in the cut-scenes
What they need to fix:
C'mon, guys. 2D or 3D? Make a choice and stick with it!

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	The cel-shaded look suits the futuristic setting
Sound	03	The worst voice acting you'll hear. Ever
Gameplay	07	Could be better – gets a little repetitive
Life span	06	Compulsive playing, if you've got nothing better to do

Attempts to please everyone invariably end up failing miserably. So-so at best.

06



DESTRUCTION DERBY: ARENAS

The return of the game that practically invented the fender bender

PUBLISHER: SONY
DEVELOPER: STUDIO 33
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-4
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.PLAYSTATION.COM
60HZMODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO



Sony has got a bit of a problem when it comes to online gaming. There's still far too many PS2 owners out there who haven't yet taken the online plunge. Make an online-only game and its sales will be rubbish. Make an online game with a single player mode and the developers has the difficult task of designing a game for two completely different audiences. *Destruction Derby: Arenas* displays all the signs of a game struggling to please two markedly different crowds.

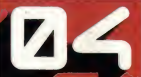
The visuals have been kept pretty simple so that the game runs smoothly online. Unfortunately this means that it looks like a bit of a dog. Ignoring the wonderful damage models in games like *Burnout* and *V8 Supercars*, DDA's car damage is terribly basic and rather pathetic. It's a huge backwards step for a series renowned for its ludicrously satisfying smashes and beaten up cars. Looking at DDA you'd never believe that this was the series that gave birth to the wonderful *Driver* games. Tragic.

The car handling is so arcade, there's very little skill involved in getting your machine around each course. It might be good for jumping into an online melee but it's a kick in the teeth for the single player who's shelled out \$100 on the game. Even in multi-player the thrill of the smash quickly subsides with races possessing very little depth and almost no need for strategy. Very, very disappointing. **Mikey Foley**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	04	Your PS2 won't even brake a sweat
Sound	05	Crash, bang, wallop
Gameplay	04	Immediate thrills. Little long term appeal
Life span	04	Not enough for the single player

A car wreck of a game and we don't mean that kindly. Far too basic in every area because of its online limitations.



TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2004

Think you're an armchair soccer expert? It's time to prove it



If you love soccer, soccer management titles are more addictive than an extra strong cup of coffee to go with your morning ciggy and a treble whiskey chaser on the side. They've been known to bring about divorces, ruin promising careers and cause failures across the board at exams. They have that "just five more minutes" ability to keep you sitting in front of your TV for hours, busting for the toilet but never daring to leave your seat in case Beckham finally decides to sign for your club. *Total Club Manager 2004* is no exception.

It's massively comprehensive with bang up to date team line-ups and the choice of hundreds of clubs from across the globe. Once you've chosen your squad you can tinker with everything from match tactics to training schedules and club sponsorship to stadium expansion. The wealth of information can prove a little overwhelming at times and navigating your way through it all can become somewhat clumsy and confusing with the joypad. Transfers are also pretty unrealistic with big clubs like Man U and Arsenal letting their star players join your

team without any fuss. As if Fergie would let Giggs join archrivals Liverpool!

In a clever move by EA Sports the graphics from *FIFA 2004* are used to show how your matches unfold and you can even export your carefully constructed squads into *FIFA 2004* where you can play them against your mates. However, you really need to be into soccer and know all about the players, tactics and competitions to make the most of this game. **Mikey Foley**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	07	Clear, concise menus and polished match visuals
Sound	07	Good selection of tunes, great commentary
Gameplay	08	Could be time to set up "Gamers Anonymous"
Life span	09	Infinite replayability

Armchair soccer fans beware: this game could ruin your life. It may not look pretty but it's criminally addictive.



PUBLISHER: EA SPORTS
DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.EA.COM
60HZMODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO

Static statistics. See? We are clever!





"There must be easier ways to scratch your arse!"



Another Kiwi wicket. Is there anything more satisfying?

PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: HB STUDIOS
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-4 (WITH MULTITAP)
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE: WWW.EASPORTS.COM.AU
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

BACK STORY

Canadian developer HB Studios was responsible for both the Rugby games as well as the previous PS2 ball-thwacker, Cricket 2002. Cricket 2004 has been in development since June 2002. Previous cricket games of note include Super International Cricket on the SNES and Howzat! on the Commodore 64.

BETTER THAN:
CRICKET 2002
WORSE THAN:
BACKYARD CRICKET

LAB TEST
What they nailed this time:
The number of modes, teams, players and features. Spot on!
What they need to fix:
The flawed gameplay; it's still way too buggy and unpredictable



The one-armed bowler. He killed Harrison Ford's wife in *The Fugitive*, you know...



McGrath gets dispensed to the boundary. Now that's rare!



SAY MY NAME, BITCH!



The Create-a-Player mode is remarkably thorough; there's numerous stats to create from basic stamina ratings to your favourite shot, and even whether or not you're a partnership breaking bowler. And if your surname is the same as one of the hundreds in the game's database, Richie Benaud will say it when you play. Plus, fear not Shane Warne fans, he might not be included in the game but there is a preset face skin that looks uncannily like the champion bowler...

CRICKET 2004

A new cricket game? Smack my pitch up!

While EA Sports' *Cricket 2002* was a big seller, it did enjoy the luxury of being the only leather-on-willow sim available on PS2, and thus die hard fans didn't have much choice but to endure its rather buggy gameplay. So, with *Cricket 2004*, EA faces the pressure of releasing a game with improvements beyond the token roster updates, in order to warrant a purchase from those same ardent sledge-flinging, box-adjusting fans.

Developer HB Studios has applied a considerable amount of polish to the features of the previous game, and we don't mean it has taken them and rubbed them on its inner thigh. The most apparent new feature is the inclusion of both Australia's domestic teams and the English county competition. Along with a few new nations in the international competition and a handful of other All-Star teams and the like, that equates to a whopping 56 teams with over 1000 players. The ability to pick and choose players from all the Pura Cup teams for your Australian side coupled with a fairly comprehensive Create-a-player mode gives you a Cricket game that could conceivably never go out of date.

The Foreign Tour mode is also a nice inclusion. There's about a dozen trips you can take, from tours on the sub-continent to trips to the West Indies. These tours are quite realistic too. For example, if you take England on an Ashes tour to Australia, not only will you have to play the Test series and one day series but also the warm up matches against the local state teams, Australia A side and even the Prime Minister's XI. The form of your players fluctuates over these tours adding a further touch of realism.

However, like a cricket ball, if you're going to shine one side you have to have the other side rough, or in *Cricket 2004*'s case; the rough gameplay. Actually playing the game feels remarkably similar to 2002's edition, warts and all. The commentary is still laughably inaccurate, and rehashes almost all of the phrases used in the previous game. The batsmen are sluggish and unresponsive, fielders still drop absolute sitters, and major bugs are still glaringly apparent, although the wicket keeper is more likely to field wide balls down the leg side now.

But it ain't all bad. Unlike the last edition where fielders would hit the stumps with absolutely every throw, they can now miss, creating more opportunities for overthrows. The changes to the bowling are largely cosmetic, but you now get bowler fatigue and batsman confidence represented by meters on-screen.

Ultimately *Cricket 2004* is a worthwhile purchase for fans thanks to the sheer number of stats, teams, tours and tournaments. It is only the true fans, however, that will keep smiling through the dodgy commentary, occasionally ridiculous decisions and mostly average controls. **Tristan Ogilvie**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	05	Ropey animation, shocking player likenesses
Sound	06	Commentary is rarely accurate & always disjointed
Gameplay	07	Buggy, unresponsive at times. Fun with four players
Life span	08	Definitely not lacking in things to do

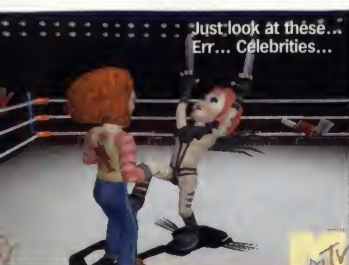
Howzat? Not out-standing. Comes close to being great, but falls short due to the inherited flaws of Cricket 2002.

07



Would've crashed into middle and off. On yer bike, son...





PUBLISHER: TAKE 2
DEVELOPER:
GOTHAM GAMES
PRICE: \$49.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEB SITE: WWW.GOTHAM
GAMES.COM/GAMES/DEATH
MATCH/INDEX.SHTML
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO

CELEBRITY DEATH MATCH

Don't get ready to rumble! Stay home instead. Seriously



MTV has birthed a lot of kinda funny, goofy but ultimately disposable television properties onto this Earth. One of the more notorious examples of this is *Celebrity Deathmatch*; a mildly entertaining claymation show that pits various celebrities against one another in a "Two men enter - one man leave" kind of scenario.

The real gimmick of the show is that it takes celebs that might have a real life beef with each other and then uses said beef in the gory grudge match. Apart from everything else that is wrong with the PS2 incarnation of *Celebrity Deathmatch* the fact is that the fights between the various celebs are never going to be really funny because they're never going to be current.

Complaining about that, however, is like complaining about the splinter on your thumb that you got from touching the massive wooden stake that has just been rammed up your rectum, because *Celebrity Deathmatch* is a dirty great stinker. Even if you forgive the fact that

the list of celebrities is tiny and includes such non-entities as Anna Nicole Smith, Carrot Top (?) and Dennis Rodman. Even if you choose to look past the singular lack of arenas and the lame, limited "Create-a-celebrity" mode, you won't be able to get past the unfunny "Special moves", the irritating button mashing based gameplay and the fact you could easily finish the whole thing in under half an hour. **Anthony O'Connor**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	03	Blander than an album of "Whale songs"
Sound	02	Awful voice acting with unfunny one-liners
Gameplay	02	B-list celebs and button mashing. Gag
Life span	02	You'd rather catch Ebola than replay this

Even at the budget price it won't be long before this tedious fighting game is palmed off to someone you hate.

03



FORD RACING 2

Is Henry Ford rolling in his grave?



Ford Racing 2 seems kind of like a support band, warming up the crowd before big daddy *Turismo* saunters onto the stage. Like a support band, there will be some willing to give it a go and some who would rather choke on their copy of *GT3* before playing it.

The surprising news is that it isn't that bad. Admittedly, there's a limited amount of vehicles on offer and you could probably knock it over in a weekend, but for such a cheap title it's worth a look. For those who recall the original *Ford Racing* on PSone, rest assured *Ford Racing 2* is a great deal better than its woeful predecessor.

The driving physics are actually quite satisfying, the sound is also better than average, although the handful of music tracks get repetitive after a while. While the graphics are not breathtaking, they are crisp and consistent and anyone who's played *Starky and Hutch* will be familiar with the bold visuals. The tracks are varied, ranging from a dusty backwoods railroad town to racing around an erupting volcano, but there's only 16 of

them. The amount of vehicles on offer isn't exactly ample either; there's only a little over 30 cars to choose from, including Yankee classics like the '67 Mustang and '55 Thunderbird.

There're a handful of modes on offer, but the most rewarding is the Ford Challenge. Each time you complete a challenge you're rewarded with unlocked items. It's a nice system which keeps you coming back, even if the lifespan is only a couple of days. **Luke Reilly**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	08	Bright, polished and better than average
Sound	06	The tracklist is very short, sound effects are fine
Gameplay	08	Nice handling, varied challenges, addictive for a while
Life span	05	Needed more cars and tracks. Will age quickly

It's outclassed by the big boys, but *Ford Racing 2* is a surprisingly solid racing title at a wallet-friendly price.

07



PUBLISHER: RED ANT
DEVELOPER:
RAZORWORKS STUDIOS
PRICE: \$49.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEB SITE: WWW.FORD
RACING2.COM/
60HZ MODE: YES
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: YES

NAVAL OPS: WARSHIP GUNNER/ARC THE LAD



It would be really cool if this ship transformed into a giant robot. Sigh...



What's long, hard and full of Seamen ... ?

NAVAL OPS: WARSHIP GUNNER

Ignore Dido. We're not going down with this ship



Insomnia will never be a problem again ...



There's niche – pro darts, synchronised swimming – and then there's one-armed dwarf tossing. *Naval Ops: Warship Gunner* falls squarely into the latter category, only without the bruised midguts. One part real-time naval strategy, the other ship building micro management. Put the two together and you've got a game that will appeal to ship building/sinking fanatics and pretty much no one else.

The sea battles are relatively simple to get to grips with, thanks to a very handy tutorial, but can quickly feel confused and chaotic. There are specific techniques for defence and attack but sometimes it seems easier to just hit the enemy with everything you've got and hope they sink first. Which kind of negates the strategy element.

Managing theme parks and designing rollercoasters is fun. Choosing what material to make your hull out of and what shade of grey to paint it doesn't quite compete. It's all very detailed with menu after menu of weapons to invest in, areas to concentrate your R&D on and even the

ability to design your own ship, right down to the gun placements and of course hull material. Yawn.

Warship Gunner is not an awful game, it's just not one we could recommend to anyone but the most hardcore man of the sea. It's very workmanlike without rewarding you with any thrills or features that will put a smile on your face. If you want to show off what your PS2 can do this isn't the game to pop in the tray. **Mikey Foley**

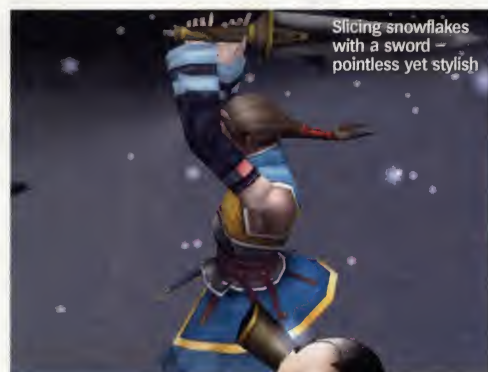
OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	04	Bland enough to induce sea blindness
Sound	05	Forgetful, uninspiring battle music
Gameplay	05	Only for the truly dedicated
Life span	06	It'll last all three of you ages

Far too limited in its subject matter and uninspiring in its execution. Retired sea dogs need only apply.

05

PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: KOEI
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1
OUT: NOW
WEBSITE:
WWW.KOEI.COM/LAUNCH/
WARSHIP_GUNNER/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO



Slicing snowflakes with a sword – pointless yet stylish



Swirly green bits – this must be an RPG



ARC THE LAD: TWILIGHT OF THE SPIRITS

Arc-haic? But there's a lot to like in this traditional RPG

In April last year, a game package called *Arc the Lad* for the PSone hit US shelves. The six disc set contained three games with one continuous storyline. Sadly, it made no appearance on Australian shores. Because we've missed out on the first three parts of the story there's definitely a lack of continuity when you play *Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits*, however it still deserves much more than a passing glance.

The plot of the game takes place many years after the previous story. Humans and Delmos, the two races who inhabit the world, have been at war for a long time. Both races, however, are searching for Spirit Stones in order to strengthen their cities and magical powers. In the midst of all this, two young men – one human, one Delmos – find themselves crucial to the survival of their races.

The game looks and feels like a simplified version of a *Final Fantasy* game. However *Arc* belies its commonplace

RPG atmosphere, whether it be the unconventional RTS/RPG battle system, or the unexpected plot twists.

Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits is a game which makes a mockery of the saying, "first impressions last." While initially you may be turned off by the less-than cutting-edge graphics and irritating script, stick with it – you'll be pleasantly surprised. **Michelle Starr**

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	07	Doesn't exactly stress your PS2, but passable
Sound	06	The music is okay. The dialogue is downright awful
Gameplay	08	Maybe not mind-blowing, but at least entertaining
Life span	07	Handy to keep for a rainy day

It isn't original, but *Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits* is a welcome addition to the list of new generation RPGs.

07





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PlayStation 2



With over 50 annihilatingly destructive weapons, Ratchet and Clank 2 has got more firepower than you could shake a quadruple-barrelled-laser-guided-ballistic stick at. au.playstation.com - ratchetandclank2.com

fun,
anyone?
PlayStation 2

XTREME LEGENDS/DYNASTY TACTICS 2



DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: XTREME LEGENDS

Finally, an Xtreme game that doesn't feature skateboarding

PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: KOEI
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEB SITE: WWW.KOEI.COM/4XL/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO



While some may see an expansion on the fourth game in a series as flogging a dead horse, Koei has done an admirable job updating the *Dynasty Warriors* series and injecting some more life into it with the new modes provided in *Xtreme Legends*. The game involves engaging in the fierce battles that ensued at the collapse of the Han Dynasty, as one of forty odd fearsome warriors armed with a variety of pointy objects for hurting people.

For the uninitiated, the performance of your contribution to the battle affects the flow of the fight – fight well and your troops will be encouraged. You can choose to battle alongside your own forces or head off and hold strategic points on the map or steal an enemy's horse and use it to charge the opposition.

The new additions to *Xtreme Legends* are the Legend and Xtreme modes. Legend mode lets you play through a more story-based level with each of

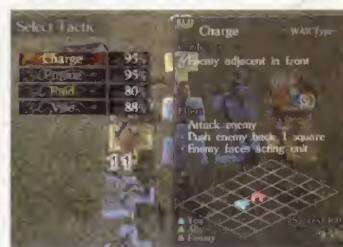
the characters, and find out how they fit into the Three Kingdoms saga. Xtreme mode follows a more in-depth, RPG-style of play, where you earn experience and can develop your character.

In the end, despite the borrowings from other genres, you'll really need to be a fan of the unmitigated violence of scrolling beat-em-ups to get your money out of this one. **A-** Nick O'Shea

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	06	Simple visuals make for swarms of opponents
Sound	07	All the sword-clanging and screaming of battle
Gameplay	07	Battlefield chaos in your lounge room
Life span	07	Strategy and RPG elements add to the replay value

Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends is strictly one for beat-'em-up fans. Just don't call it mindless.



DYNASTY TACTICS 2

Smash your foes like a Ming vase!



Set in China, just after the collapse of the Han Dynasty, *Dynasty Tactics 2* is an intense strategy game detailing the exploits of four heroes of the Three Kingdoms era. After selecting your hero, play ensues in two main modes, firstly on the main map screen where you prepare your armies, train your generals and manoeuvre your forces, and the battle screen, where two forces clash.

The battles in *DT2* encompass levels of strategy that would make Garry Kasparov crap himself. Using special tactical attacks in battle, you are treated to a nicely meshed cut-scene of your General leading the charge into the fray. By using strategic orders and tactics combos, you can have units attack in combination or act in assistance to their comrades. This leads to not only having to plan in advance for your moves, but also where tactics may drive your units; and whether or not this may chain into continued assaults.

Keeping an eye on this many moves ahead is a daunting task and will probably scare beginners off. On

top of that, *DT2* is particularly unforgiving. Defeat in any single battle means the game is over and you're subsequently taken to a dreaded Game Over screen. Saving is only permitted when exiting the game, so you have to learn well from your mistakes.

That said, decent strategy titles are pretty thin on the ground for the PS2. If you like your strategy games to be particularly cerebral and are prepared to learn the hard way, you'll want to check this one out. **A-** Nick O'Shea

OFFICIAL VERDICT

Graphics	06	First generation visuals
Sound	07	Sword clangs and warcries in digital surround
Gameplay	07	Deep, but complicated and unforgiving
Life span	07	Four campaigns to complete

Dynasty Tactics 2 is purely one for the more masochistic strategy gurus. You know who you are.



PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: KOEI
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1-2
OUT: NOW
WEB SITE: WWW.KOEI.COM/4XL/
60HZ MODE: NO
WIDESCREEN: NO
SURROUND SOUND: NO
DOLBY DIGITAL 5.1

Nothing tastes sweeter. Except maybe chocolate-coated sugar cubes





Everybody needs a hero

PlayStation 2



If you prefer your heroes tough then get ready, because Jak's back. Armed with all-new weapons and one bad attitude, he'll stop at nothing to get revenge. More evolved than the original, Jak II: Renegade has enhanced gameplay and even bigger worlds to explore, in an experience so intense it's been rated "10/10 - best platform game ever" by Official PlayStation Magazine.

NAUGHTY DOG

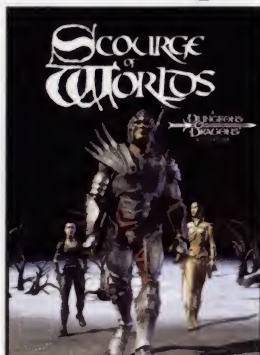
www.jak2renegade.com



fun, anyone?
PlayStation 2

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Dungeons & Dragons: Scourge of Worlds



Starring: Lester Rosenthal, Anna Deas, Caroline Lesley, Jack Brown, Sam Cunningham **Distributor:** Warner Vision **Out:** Now **Price:** \$31.95

FILM: This computer generated fantasy tells the tale of a band of heroes questing to prevent an all-powerful weapon falling into the hands of evil. Among the heroes are the human warrior Aragorn, the no-nonsense dwarf Gimli and the lithe elf Legolas ... oh wait, that's the other movie. This movie is identical to *Lord of the Rings*, except that the one Ring has been replaced with a silly Holy Grail, cupey thing. The dwarf and the elf have also had sex change operations and the lead warrior has less personality than a toaster, but other than that it's almost as good. Kind of.

The one thing that does save this flick from becoming a shiny beer coaster is its unique choose-your-own-adventure gimmick. At each point where the characters are about to make an important decision the screen throws up a couple of choices for you to navigate through with your remote. So when the band of heroes is ambushed by a group of trolls, you get to take your pick of whether they slice them into kebabs or run screaming. With 20 decision points and 200 different story paths, there's a lot to be seen, but maths whizzes will remember that boring multiplied by 200 still equals boring. **5/10**

EXTRAS: You'll find more extras in a can of No Frills corn. **0/10**

VERDICT: The concept behind *Scourge of Worlds* is brilliant but dated graphics and plot mean it won't keep anyone with a double digit age or IQ amused for long. **NP**

Later with Jools Holland: Party



Starring: Various **Distributor:** Warner Vision **Out:** Now **Price:** \$31.95

FILM: For the last few years, accomplished pianist and ex-member of the band Squeeze, Jools Holland has tried to liven up cringe-inducing New Year's Eve television in the UK with a series of performances from accomplished musicians.

Okay, so you might not know much about the host, but you're probably familiar with the likes of Eric Clapton, Tom Jones and Edwin Starr. Or at least your parents will be.

Party is a collection of seemingly unrelated songs ("Fly me to the moon", "War", "Bebop a Lula") performed in an unspectacular fashion by seemingly unrelated artists. Even though the

syrupey New Year sentiment throughout the disc seems horribly contrived, particularly when you know that the specials themselves weren't even taped on New Year's Eve, there's a couple of standout performances from the likes of Jimmy Cliff ("You can get it") and Sharleen Spiteri ("Surrender"). But the majority of the performers seem to be just awkwardly going through the motions. **5/10**

EXTRAS: Almost none, except for the option to play six of the songs in any order you like. So not that exciting, really. **1/10**

VERDICT: The music is mostly good, and perhaps would have made a great CD, but it's unlikely that anyone would wish to actually watch it more than once. **TO**

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TO BE IN THE RUNNING FOR A DVD – we've got 10 to give away – just answer this simple question: "Name one of the stars of the movie" Follow the competition entry details to the right and mark your entries "Dungeons and Dragons".

ISSUE #22 WINNERS:

WWE SmackDown: T Joyner (ACT), E Jorgenson (Qld), S Robbins (Qld), M Russel (NSW), D Grigg (NSW), C Drayton (NSW), D Herriman (Vic), C Royds (NSW), R Mitchel (NSW), A Kemp (NSW)
Transformers: R Lanning (NSW), A Kelly (Qld)



HOW TO ENTER – Send entries to OPS2@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the comp in the subject line or alternatively, send envelopes via snail mail to: *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022. Email entrants are entitled to one email per competition only. Entries should be clearly marked and include: The name of the comp, your name, age, email, phone number (mobile also) and address. All competitions close 1 March, 2004. This comp is also open to NZ residents. *Note: Images of prizes as shown above may vary from the appearance of the actual prizes received due to circumstances beyond the publisher's control.*

American Wedding

Director Jesse Dylan/Starring Jason Biggs, Alyson Hannigan, Seann William Scott, Eugene Levy, Chris Klein/Distributor Universal/Out Now/Price \$36.95



FILM: The *American Pie* series recharged interest in the raunchy comedy genre made popular by the likes of *Animal House*. It was fair to expect the second sequel to be rubbish, but the series bounces back to firm with the final chapter.

Having left behind the horrors of school and college, Jim decides to ask Michelle to marry him. Cue the first set piece as Jim tries to talk to his dad about the marriage while receiving a blowjob under the table from his prospective wife to be. Despite the rather unromantic circumstances of Jim's proposal, Michelle is happy to accept.

Wedding plans begin – but since this is Jim's wedding we know all is

not going to go to plan. For one thing, Stifler finds out about the impending nuptials and insists on being involved. Then there are Michelle's parents, who are not especially quick to forgive when they bust Jim and Stifler in what appears to be a foursome (with two dogs).

If there's a fault with *Wedding*, it's that it overdoes the Stifler factor (especially in the extended version). But with sharp writing and Eugene Levy in fine form, as a second sequel it passes the test on every level. **8/10**

EXTRAS: Deleted scenes, outtakes, Stifler Speak, commentaries and documentaries. **8/10**

VERDICT: A worthy sequel backed by generally strong extras makes this one to buy, unless you're waiting for the inevitable box set. **KA**

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Stifler Speak

Ever wanted to speak like Stifler? This documentary shows you how. One key ingredient is to just say whatever comes into your mind. The second is to combine a swear word with an innocuous one – for instance, "cock lunch". As a bonus, you also get Seann William Scott's original screen test.

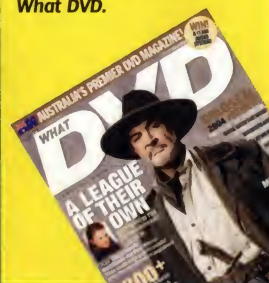


DVD OF THE MONTH

There was no doubt the church choir had good voices, but their facial expressions needed work

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Finding Nemo

Director Andrew Stanton, Lee Unkrich/Starring Albert Brooks, Ellen DeGeneres, Alexander Gould, Willem DaFoe, Barry Humphries, Eric Bana/Distributor Buena Vista/Out Now/Price \$34.95



FILM: It's a tribute to Pixar Studios that it has invented a new sub-genre – the Pixar movie. But even more impressive is that others have tried to copy its formula and largely failed. What *Toy Story*, *Toy Story 2*, *Monsters Inc* and the rest have in common is hard work and talent. *Nemo* was never going to fail because its creators slogged their guts out to make sure it didn't.

Everything about this film is taut and musclebound. Adults and kids alike can identify with the themes – the difference between nurturing

and smothering, the desire to discover life for oneself, the powerful bond of parent and child. The voice acting is also terrific on every count.

In terms of complexity, storyline and general audience appeal, *Finding Nemo* outstrips every other Pixar film yet made. Could there be any finer compliment? **9/10**

EXTRAS: A special new visual commentary, aquarium screen saver and more documentaries than you can shake a fin make this a brilliant bonus disc. **9/10**

VERDICT: The must-have DVD. Even those who found Pixar's previous stuff too cutesy will be hooked. **KA**



"If you're not a piranha fish then what happened to the rest of this diver?"



EXTRA! EXTRA!

Behind the scenes

In a less serious take on the making-of theme, there is "Studio Tour", where young Alexander Gould visits each department in Pixar to discover they're all a bunch of bludgers who only work when the director is in the vicinity. "Character Interviews" sees more hi-jinks from the *Nemo* characters as a doomed crew member tries to get some sense out of them.

feedback

This month we discuss THUG, fat chicks and those darn Wachowskis ...

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BEST BIRDMAN BUY?

First off I'd like to say that your mag rocks and you guys are doing a great job - I just have one problem. In the Xmas Issue you reviewed Tony Hawk's Underground and said

It was better than all of the previous Tony Hawk games, yet you only gave it a 9. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 got a 10 and THPS3 got a 9. THUG may not be up to the standards of current games getting 10 out of 10 yet I think it is wrong that people may go out and buy THPS4 or THPS3 because they got better (or as good as) scores. The Australian public respects and trusts your judgement. I think that maybe back

checking could be good for reviewing sequels and games of the same genre so that better games get a better review.

Nick, via email

Well Nick, rest assured that we always double check the scores of other games when we are reviewing a game in the same genre. The fact remains that as time goes on, technology and game development techniques evolve and improve and thus the standard is continually being raised. So even though we feel THUG is clearly superior to previous editions in the Tony Hawk series, we've had to be a little tougher on it score-wise. But that's why we've added the better than/worse than ratings to our bigger reviews; to make choosing games easier for you.

WHY NO TIS 2004?

I was reading through the Incoming games section of your magazine when I saw This Is Soccer 2004 was set to be released in November 2003. I was eager for it to hit the shelves because the games design and reputation were building up into something quite interesting, that could maybe even challenge the bland FIFA or even the cult of Pro Evolution Soccer. So the months have passed by and I have been waiting patiently and it's now 2004 and the game is still not out!

Jack Boschert, VIC

We can appreciate how anxious you must be getting, Jack. Unfortunately TIS 2004 has been delayed from its original intended release, but take that as a positive. We know the boffins over at Sony's Soho studios are cracking the whip to ensure that this year's edition is the best yet and a worthy contender to try and nab Pro Evo's soccer crown. When we contacted Sony at the time of writing, they couldn't confirm a release date but they did promise that we'll be seeing a local release sometime before May 2004.

BULLET TIME FOR WACHOWSKIS

I'm just writing this because I feel that someone should go to bat for the Wachowski brothers and the concept of "Bullet Time". You see, I feel that the brothers didn't know what they were doing

when they let the world into their little secret and inadvertently caused one of the best and worst features of many games. I'm writing this because I have heard so many snide comments made about the Brothers in OPS2. Move on and be grateful during the good slow motion shots on Burnout 2 and Enter The Matrix but also through the long ponderous scenes in many tacky games.

Chad Aitken, via email

Firstly, Chad, the Wachowski brothers didn't invent slow motion camera techniques, so we can't really credit them for the replays in Burnout 2. But yes, their "Bullet Time" technology has had a massive effect in everything from films to television commercials and of course, videogames - and we've got no problem with that. We do have a problem however, with the Wachowski Brothers taking what was an enjoyable stand alone film and turning it into a poorly scripted, badly acted, uninspired and thoroughly lifeless trilogy just to make cash. So there.

NO FAT CHICKS

When I first got Grand Theft Auto III I loved it. Then after I completed it I got Vice City and I got tired of it quickly. While I am playing Vice City I get the feeling that I am in a better, newer Liberty City. Don't get me wrong, I still love coming home from work

and running over some fat chicks while enjoying the amazing Vice City scenery. My question is, should I keep on trying to complete Vice City or buy on of the great titles you guys have been doing a great job reviewing, such as Prince of Persia, Jak II: Renegade or even Simpsons: Hit and Run?

Matt, via email

PS: I missed the October issue ...

That's precisely why Rockstar didn't title it Grand Theft Auto IV: Vice City, Matt. While it does have a heck of new features and better graphics, it's not really a proper revolution of the series. For that we'll have to wait for Sin City (see page 11). Definitely complete Vice City and enjoy all it has to offer though, but if you're looking for a break from that style of game then you should give Prince of Persia a try - you won't be disappointed. By the way you didn't miss much in the October issue, aside from the detailed info on the PlayStation 4, a demo disc with a full playable version of Metal Gear Solid 3 on it and a graphic centrefold of Narayan during his risqué 'shaved' period.

GAMECUBE GETS EVIL

I may not be the only one outraged about this matter, but what the hell happened to Resident Evil? Okay, so they're releasing RE: Outbreak, but that's just a way of laughing at us and keeping the PS2 owners happy. But my real concern is what happened to the Resident Evil series? I heard that they have been in development exclusively for the Nintendo GameCube. Who the hell is going to buy these games when hardly anyone owns a GameCube and whoever does own one is probably a kid aged between 5-10. My point is why release it on the GameCube when the original series on the PSone revolutionised the horror genre and sold millions? RE Code: Veronica X was an amazing game on the PS2 but that's it - all the others were

just poorly designed gun shooters that must have been made by the trainee staff at Capcom.

Abdul, via email

We can't feel too hard done by, Abdul. While Gamecube owners did get the prequel to the series, Resident Evil Zero, they only had a remake of Resident Evil and straight ports of RE2 and RE3 from the PSone! Meanwhile, we PS2 owners are getting Resident Evil Outbreak which is set to rejuvenate the series (see page 36) and provide an all new experience for fans. We know which boat we'd rather be in ...





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RE-BOOT

Dropping more hints than a spoilt brat at Christmas time



Whoever said "War's Hell" obviously hadn't read our *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun* playguide. It's packed with so many battle-hardened tips and tactics that you'll be able to strip, polish and reload your weapon blindfolded – while making out with two chicks at the same time! It's that hot! Once you've had a smoke and gotten your breath back, whack your copy of *True Crime* in the disc tray and get a load of our breakdowns of the game's second and third plot paths. For all you bad cops out there, we show you how to do it gangsta style.

James Ellis

JAMES ELLIS
Tips Editor

IN HARDCORE THIS MONTH...

086.....MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN.....TACTICS
088.....TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA.....TIPS
092.....TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND.....CHEATS
092.....NEED FOR SPEED.....CHEATS
092.....THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN.....CHEATS
092.....JAK II: RENEGADE.....CHEATS

ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH

MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

We go behind enemy lines for these tactics!

GENERAL TIPS

Never go into battle without this info

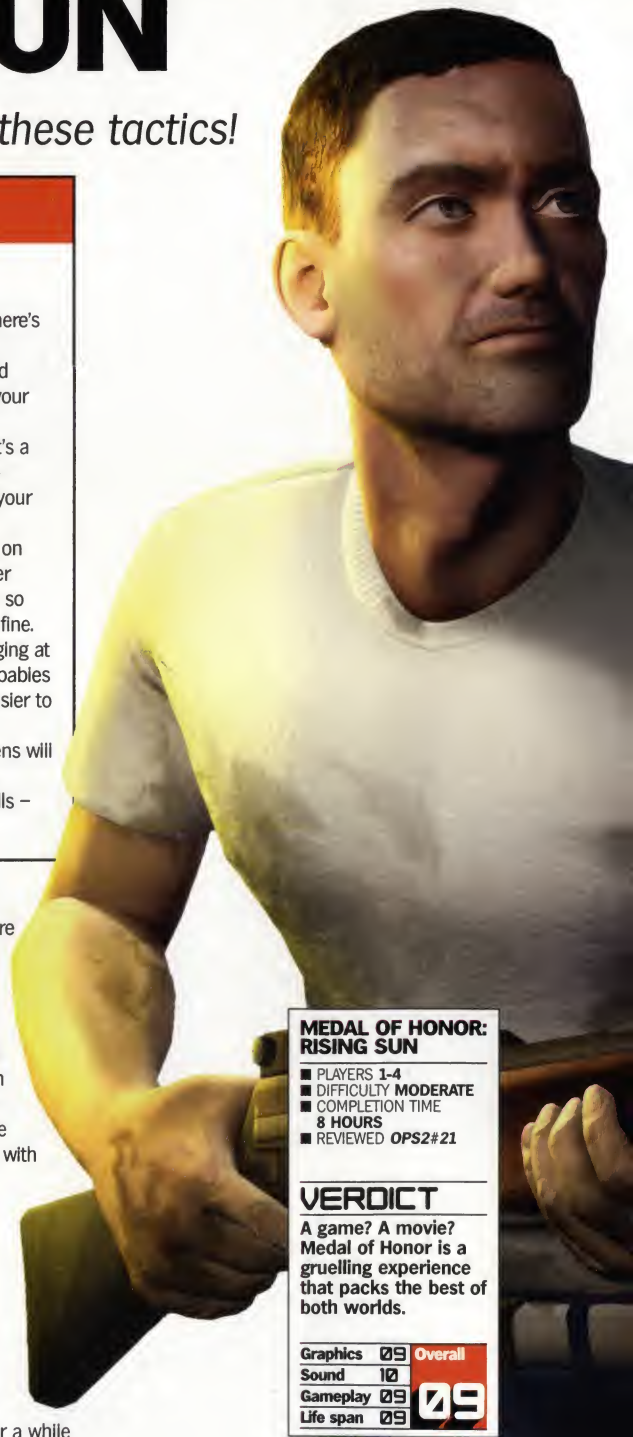
- Always, ALWAYS, ALWAYS make sure your weapon is loaded. There's nothing worse than getting into the middle of a big fire fight and realising that you've got to wait for the, frankly, very lengthy reload animation. Any time you have a moment's peace make sure all your weapons are loaded.
- Take it slow. Rushing ahead in this game is just plain foolish. It's a WWII sim, not some space fighter. Your weapons are not going to vaporise an entire village. Use your brain and, when you have it, your Sniper Scope.
- Whenever you're using a mounted gun, whether it be on land, on water or in the air don't be precious with the ammo. For whatever reason all the mounted guns in this game have unlimited bullets so keep that finger pressed firmly on the trigger and you should be fine.
- Kill all running enemies first! When a Japanese soldier is charging at you it often means he's got his sword or bayonet out and these bables do some serious damage. Fortunately, a running target seems easier to kill than a standing or lying one. If it runs, kill it.
- Always check the bodies of your enemies. Often health canteens will remain after a dead foe's body vanishes. Even if it means going somewhat out of your way, you're well advised to inspect your kills – they just might keep you alive.

MISSION 1: DAY OF INFAMY

Very much like *MOH: Frontline*'s Normandy opening, this level is more about setting the tone and giving the player some spectacular visuals rather than offering a genuine challenge. Still for the record, here are the instructions...

After you leap out of your bunk run straight forwards and out the door. Turn right in the hall and run straight to the end. Electrical wires block your path so go left into the Shower Rooms. Go through the showers, exit them and go inside the Barbershop area. Keep on going until you reach the Post Office then go up the stairs. Jump the first sparking wires and duck under the second. Assist the engineer with the heavy door at the end of the hall.

Turn left, up the stairs and run to the fire where you'll get a fire extinguisher. Use it to extinguish the flames. Follow the distressed screams of other crewmen and put out the fire to save them. Go back into the hall and run along, putting out fires as you go. When you eventually reach the kitchen you'll give the fire extinguisher to the cook. Keep on going ahead, then use the save point. Head out into the corridor and go up the stairs to the topside. All hell is breaking loose and you'll be handed a weapon. Ignore that tiny little pea shooter and run up to the mounted guns where you can really let the flying Japanese planes learn a thing or two. After shooting for a while



MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

- PLAYERS 1-4
- DIFFICULTY MODERATE
- COMPLETION TIME 8 HOURS
- REVIEWED OPS2#21

VERDICT

A game? A movie? *Medal of Honor* is a gruelling experience that packs the best of both worlds.

Graphics	09	Overall	09
Sound	10		
Gameplay	09		
Life span	09		

you'll cue a cut-scene and the end of the level.

MISSION 2: PEARL HARBOUR

After the cut scene finishes you'll find this next level is basically you, in a boat, manning the mounted guns and blasting the Japanese planes. There's no real strategy to this, rather you should learn the patterns in which the enemy fighters fly and be ready for them. Another key point is to keep on firing at all times. Ammo is unlimited so keep your finger on the trigger and keep listening to the instructions of your crew mates. This mission can be a little tricky but it's just a question of learning where to point your guns and when. After it's all over you'll cue a cut-scene and the end of the level.

MISSION 3: FALL OF THE PHILIPPINES

This is the first of the real missions. That is, it's very long and there are lots of ways to die. Get used to it because it only gets harder from here on out.

After the opening cut-scene you'll find yourself on a bridge that's being attacked by enemy planes. You can shoot a few down if you wish but it's basically a waste of time. Run towards the end of the bridge (the side that isn't engulfed in fire, obviously) and duck behind some cover to meet up with your brother. He'll brief you on the situation and give you your mission objectives.

Up ahead of you enemy soldiers occupy the balconies and lower levels of a couple of buildings. For a start, unequip your Thompson (it's inaccurate and has lousy range) and equip the rifle. Take out enough enemy soldiers so that the way to the right-hand building is clear (if you get hit there's health packs to your right and left) and run into that building, kill the soldier inside and find the cog for the tank. Run back outside, killing the newly spawned soldiers, and put the cog back on the tank. Now the tank is ready to rock and it's your job to make sure it doesn't end up in small, burning places.

Basically the next section of this level is following the tank through the streets and killing anything that tries to destroy you or it. That's not to say the tank is defenceless, it'll make a nice mess of the enemy too, but the

running soldiers with explosives on poles are often too fast for the tank so you'd best take them out. Watch yourself at the building site to your right (after the open space with the fountain) and also make sure to lob grenades in the huts or you'll get blasted. When the tank reaches a dead end, head back the way you came, shooting newly spawned soldiers that come by ground and are on balconies. Planes will

strafe overhead, opening the doors to the school building. An enemy tank will also appear. Lob grenades at it quickly because getting hit by a tank isn't fun. Once you've destroyed it head inside the building and use the save point behind the stairs. Now head up the stairs and go to the window. Take out the three snipers that are perched on the roof across from you.

Also, blast any Japanese soldiers you see scampering about on the street.

Now head through the broken wall



and slide down the piece of wood. Sneak up behind the soldier who mans the mounted gun and kill him. Take control of the mounted gun and get ready to shoot a whole bunch of troops who will run at you with guns and bayonets. Make sure to also destroy the cover they'll try to hide behind.

Follow the street around, killing more soldiers, until you get to a gate that will lead to a baseball field. On the left hand side is a sewer pipe you can crawl into. Use it. Move through it and up the stairs and you'll find yourself in a massive baseball field.

Shoot the few enemy soldiers that attack. If you're damaged there should be health to your right. Now use your rifle to snipe the soldiers in the outposts (especially the one with the mounted gun).

Go up to the radio outpost and kill the soldier inside, then run to the other outpost and man the mounted gun. Once again troops will appear from everywhere, so make them dead with extreme prejudice. After the field is clear head towards the big packing crates. Behind these crates are three hiding soldiers. Either grenade or blast them then enter the underground tunnel. Follow the tunnel around and up until you find yourself in what appears to be a building site. Kill the enemy that is loitering around, scout for supplies, then head into the big building in front of you. Beware as you enter the gates: two troops await either side, so be quick.

Head up the building's stairs, going left and up. Soon you'll find yourself on the roof where another mounted gun sits. Man it and blast the troops and, more importantly, the enemy tank. When the town square is clear head back downstairs and join your men.

Run into the church and use the save point near the altar, then head up the church steps and ring the bell. Now run back into the town square and hop in the back of the explosives truck.

The truck will move and you'll be forced to shoot a whole bunch of moving targets, including soldiers and a tank. Use the Thompson on the soldiers, aiming mainly at the explosive barrels, and lob grenades at the tank. After a while you'll stop at the bridge and have to take out a bunch of enemies. Do so as quickly as possible and you'll cue the cut-scene and the end of this tough mother of a level.

MISSION 4: MIDNIGHT RAID ON GUADALCANAL

After the opening cut-scene you'll find yourself on a boat with some other soldiers floating down crocodile-infested waters. You'll also notice that you now have the Springfield Sniper Rifle. This weapon will be a close and dear friend to you in this level.

You'll be attacked by Japanese soldiers, first on the right bank and then on the left bank. Zoom in with the Sniper rifle and take them out. After this you'll have a short window of time where pressing the Action button will take you off the boat. It's best if you do this now.

Once off the boat follow the path along and shoot the numerous soldiers that try to stop you. Eventually you'll reach a bunker with a mounted gun. The advantage of attacking it this way is you'll be out of the gun's range, whereas if you'd stayed on the boat you'd probably be cut

in half by MG fire. Kill the enemy inside the bunker and rejoin your mates on the boat. Japanese will try to snipe you from a tree above you. Kill them and keep floating along. One of your men will get taken by a croc (oops) and soon after you'll reach land.

Walk carefully up the riverbank using your Sniper Scope to scout ahead. Things are quiet... too quiet. Abruptly a flare will shoot into the air and again all hell will break loose. Kill the enemy soldiers as quickly as you can, paying special attention to the mounted gun in the bunker. If anyone tries to man it shoot them in the head, you don't need that kind of ordinance used against you.

Follow the path around the back of the bunker and collect the goodies inside. Now turn and go down the tunnel in the cave. Inside you'll find a save point. Use it.

Cautiously walk up the other side of the cave and into the forest. Use foliage as cover. Japanese snipers will be in the trees and taking cover behind rocks. Slow, steady and snipey is the best approach. Eventually you'll reach a jeep.

Once at the jeep a whole group of soldiers will attack. Fight them off, kill the troops in the back of the jeep, jump in the back and use the mounted gun to fight off further waves of jungle enemies. Move forwards (but always watch your rear, attacks could come from anywhere, anytime) and be wary of the ground ahead of you. Japanese troops will burst from spider holes in the ground. Keep going on cautiously. Soon you'll reach the outpost. Snipe the soldiers in the watch towers and take the hill to your right. Be careful of sword-wielding enemies and collect the goodies.

Move on, killing troops, until you reach the first lot of barracks buildings. Plunder them for all the goodies inside and then go into the cave that winds around to a two-storey barracks. Kill everyone, take the supplies and head back. Soon you'll reach a path that splits into two. Take the right path and fight your way to another barracks building. Kill the enemies, take the supplies and walk around to the back of the barracks where you will need to save a native who is about to be assassinated by two Japanese officers (a couple of well-placed sniper rounds to their heads should put paid to their plans). The native will use his machete to cut a new path for you. Follow him (but first use the save point in the little cave to your right).

Keep following the path the native carved for you. It's thick jungle where soldiers jump out of yet more spider holes. You'll go through a long tunnel and come out behind a big clearing with a mounted gun. Kill the soldiers inside and use the mounted gun to empty the clearing of anything that moves. Pick up any spare canteens or ammo the soldiers may have dropped and enter another tunnel.

Go through the tunnel, fighting a few tough troops, and come outside near a shed and a watch tower. Shoot anyone who gives you the stink eye and head towards the next shed (the one with the generator in it). Kill the soldier inside and keep on going.

Enter the large barracks and clear the lower floor of enemy soldiers. Get any goodies then head upstairs, kill more troops, snipe some of the enemy outside from the rear windows, then head down a different set of stairs into the radio room.

Kill the troops in the radio room and head outside. Follow the building around until you come to a large clearing. There is a huge mounted gun here. Use it to destroy the ammo depot and a whole family of enemy troops. You'll also incur the wrath of an enemy tank, which you can try to kill with the mounted gun (risky) or by lobbing grenades at it (safer).

Head down the hill and man the mounted gun near the sandbags. Start blasting and soon you'll cue the cut-scene and the end of this even tougher mission.

TO BE CONTINUED..
That's it for the first part of our battle-hardened tactics. Check back next month when we will crack the rest of the game down.

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA

It's time for the final part of our expert True Crime playguide

THE SECOND PATH: AVERAGE COP

EPISODE 6: RAMPAGE

MISSION 1: REVENGE RUSH

They killed your little brother and now it's time to get some payback! Make it to the Gulag club on time and show Rocky the business end of your gun.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you'll move on to the next mission "Rocky's Getaway". If you fail, you'll go into the "Gulag Goons" mission.

MISSION 2: ROCKY'S GETAWAY

You made it just in time to see

Rocky get in his limo and take off, get after him!

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move onto the next mission "The Bodyguard". If you fail, you'll go into the "Wu's Turn" mission.

MISSION 2: (ALT) GULAG GOONS

Rocky's laid a crude trap at this club, but these guys should be pushovers. You hope...

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Wu's Turn". If you fail, you'll go into the "Payback" mission.

MISSION 3: THE BODYGUARD

Misha seems to want a piece of you. Leave a lasting impression on him.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Wu's Turn". If you fail, you'll go into the "Payback" mission.

MISSION 4: WU'S TURN

No matter how you got to this mission it's a cruise over to Wu's place. Take this time to get some upgrades if you have the points to spare.

PASS OR FAIL: You cannot "fail"

DOJOS, NOT DONUTS

Improve Nick Kang's fighting moves at dojos scattered around the city



■ Keep an eye on your radar for the little bar bell icons. These are dojos where Nick Kang can trade his shield points for new moves. Machine gun-toting thugs giving you trouble? Teach them some manners with a Leaping Dragon Snap Kick. Bo-yah!

Cruising/Driving mission, there is no time limit, or life limit.

MISSION 5: PAYBACK

Now you're at Wu's restaurant and his "people" want you dead for some crazy reason. Fight your way through the level to get to the back door of the restaurant.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move onto the next mission "Off to the Airport". If you fail, you'll go into the "Rocky's Loot" mission.

MISSION 6: OFF TO THE AIRPORT

Cruise over to the Airport. Since this is one of the last cruising points on this path take the opportunity to upgrade any abilities for Nick before arriving at the Santa Monica Airport.

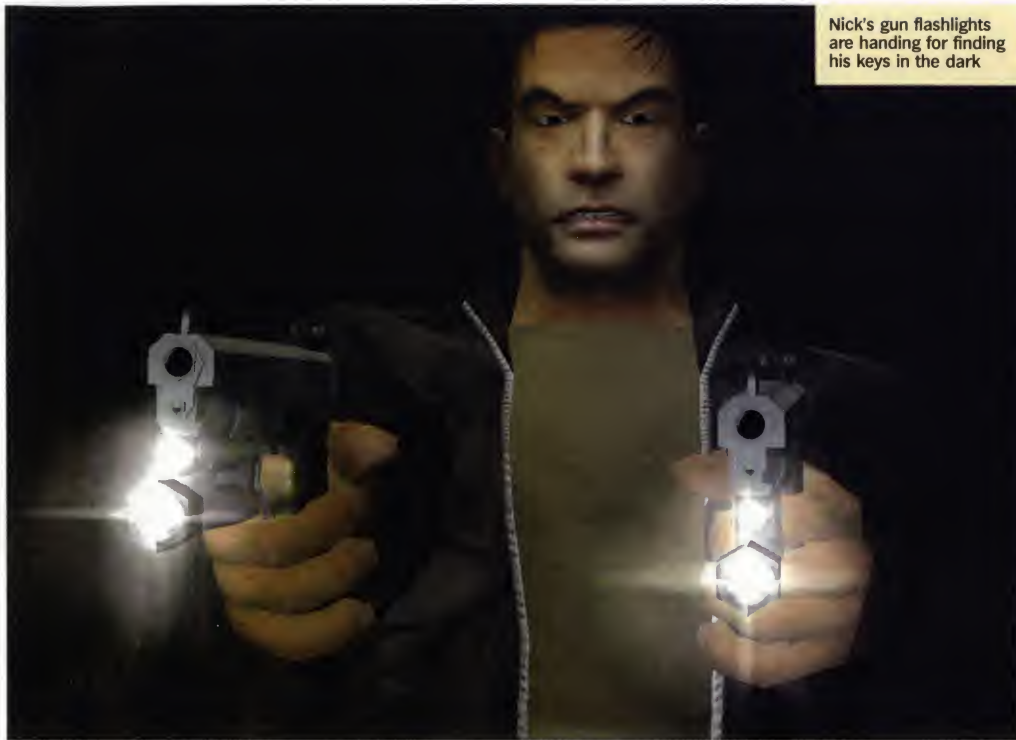
PASS OR FAIL: You cannot "fail" Cruising/Driving mission, there is no time limit, or life limit.

FINALE: ROCKY'S LOOT

You've stolen a money truck filled with counterfeit cash and are now being pursued by gun-toting goons in vehicles. Shoot their cars full of holes if you're struggling to out-run them.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission you will move on to the next episode. If you fail you'll fail the episode, continuing on to the next.





Nick's gun flashlights are handy for finding his keys in the dark

EPISODE 4: CON GIRLS

MISSION 1: STRIP CLUB DETOUR

After botching the spa job you've lost your lead. However, it seems there's a duo of female bank robbers knocking over banks all over town. It also turns out that one of them is a stripper. You know what to do. Cruise to the Strip Club. Hit some 24-7 locations along the way if you have some points to use.

PASS OR FAIL: You cannot "fail" Cruising/Driving mission, there is no time limit, or life limit.

MISSION 2: CAT FIGHT

The stripper doesn't like you. Her friends don't like you either. Beat them all up.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Cruising for Lola". If you fail, you'll go into the "Lola Rush" mission.

MISSION 3: CRUISING FOR LOLA

So the stripper is in cahoots with some crooked actress. It's time to pay her a visit. No rush, just cruise on over.

PASS OR FAIL: You cannot "fail" Cruising/Driving mission, there is no time limit, or life limit.

MISSION 3: (ALT) LOLA RUSH

Since you lost the rumble at the strip club, you're going to have to get Lola the hard way. She's expecting you at the old factory on Melrose. Get to it hotshot.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this level, you'll move on to the next level, "Five Laps". If you fail this level while you are still considered to be on the fail path, you are taken to an alternative Intro to the "Five Laps" level.



Driving in both lanes always gets you to your destination faster

MISSION 4: THE DRIVING TEST

Lola wants you to get to the Beverly Centre. It's a bit of light driving for star cop Nick Kang. Show her what you can do.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move onto the next mission "Cruising for Lola". If you fail, you'll fail the episode and continue to the next.

MISSION 5: POLICE GETAWAY

Cops are onto you and your "slick" driving. Lose em!

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission you will move onto the next mission "Busting Lola". If you fail, you'll continue to the next episode.

MISSION 5: (ALT) FIVE LAPS

Five laps around the parking lot? Seems easy enough. How fast can that Van be...right?

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move onto the next mission "Busting Lola". If you fail, you'll fail the episode and continue to the next episode.

MISSION 6: BUSTING LOLA

Lola won't go in without a fight, so give her one.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Sniper Redux". If you fail, you'll continue to the next episode.

EPISODE 8: BLOOD MONEY

MISSION 1: RACE TO ROCKY'S LAIR

Get to Rocky's private club as fast as you can!

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Kinks in the Path". If you fail, you'll go into the "Freakshow" mission.

MISSION 2: KINKS IN THE PATH

Okay, this Rocky guy is just strange. This mission sees you sneaking through some of his strange far-out hallways. On with the show!

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Freakshow". If you fail, you'll go into the "Rosie's Ransom" mission.

MISSION 3: FREAKSHOW

Well, this looks like fun. Three chicks wanting to kick your ass, and about eight gimps ready to back them up. Good luck!

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this level, you'll move on to the next level, "Rosie's Ransom". If you fail this level, while you are still considered to be on the fail path, you are taken to an alternative Intro to the "Rosie's Ransom" level.

MISSION 4: ROSIE'S RANSOM

The final cruising mission for this path is a drive to the impound lot. Feel free to upgrade your abilities for the last couple of missions.

PASS OR FAIL: You cannot "fail" Cruising/Driving mission, there is no time limit, or life limit.

MISSION 5: ESCAPING MASTERSON

Great, now Masterson is on your ass about stealing the armoured car from the impound lot. Make his life worse and take off with it anyway. Escape from his feds, easier said than done... Or is it?

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this level, you'll move on to the next level, "Chinatown Showdown". If you fail, that's the end of the game for this path. You'll see the losing ending cinematic and be offered a chance to retry.

MISSION 6: CHINATOWN SHOWDOWN

Looks like you and Rocky have some uninvited guests at the party, take them out with your mad skills!

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Last Stand". If you fail, that's the end of the game for this path. You'll see the losing ending cinematic and be offered a chance to retry.

FINALE: LAST STAND

Here it is - you against Rocky. This guy killed your dad. It's time for some sweet murderous revenge. Beat the hell out of him.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you'll be treated to the winning ending cinematic. If you fail, you'll be treated to the losing ending cinematic. As usual, you can always retry.

THE THIRD PATH: BAD COP

MISSING IN ACTION

The infamous True Crime motorcycle - can you find it?



"Mine's bigger than Tommy Vercetti's"

■ There have been a lot of rumours about the existence of motorcycles in the game. They were originally planned to be included (hence the images) but due to time constraints they were pulled from the game at the last minute.



FINALE: SNIPER REDUX

Just like at Jimmy's place – unless you failed and didn't get there. Just fire at the sniper and watch out for his shots. If you have some shooting upgrades precision targeting is the fastest way to kill him – so use it! **PASS OR FAIL:** If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next episode. If you fail, you'll continue to the next episode.

EPISODE 5: HIGH RISE TERROR

MISSION 1: THE AIRPORT LEAD

You've been given a tip from Rosie about a jet leasing company out at the Santa Monica Airport. Apparently it's got some ties to the Russian mob. Time to check it out. This is a cruising mission, and the last one on this path. Use it wisely if you have points to spend.

PASS OR FAIL: You cannot "fail" Cruising/Driving mission, there is no time limit, or life limit.

MISSION 2: CHASING ASSASSINS

Uh oh! They've killed Rocky and now they're getting away! Get on your bike and chase them down.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "A Race Downtown". If you fail, you'll go into the "Bank Standoff" mission.

MISSION 3: A RACE

DOWNTOWN

Now that you've stopped the assassins you've got to race to Downtown. There's a hostage situation at a bank and you've got to take care of it before Masterson elevates the problem!

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Bank Standoff". If you fail, you'll go into the "Going Up" mission.

MISSION 4: BANK STANDOFF

Masterson wants to send in SWAT but Nick decides to go it alone. Where Nick goes, you follow. Take out those terrorists and get in the front door!

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Lobby Firefight". If you fail, you'll go into the "Going Up" mission.

MISSION 5: LOBBY FIREFIGHT

It's quiet, but that doesn't last for long. Take out the enemies coming out of the doors and watch out for the grenade launchers. You can create a hole through the bullet-proof glass by using precision targeting on the round speaker devices. Just shoot through it when the shooter stands in line.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move onto the next mission "Hostage Crisis". If you fail, you'll go into the "Going Up" mission.

MISSION 5: (ALT) GOING UP

Make your way through three dark floors of terrorists to get to a working elevator. Watch out for ambushes!

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will

move on to the next mission "Bad Politics". If you fail, that's the end of the game for this path. You'll see the losing ending cinematic and be offered a chance to retry.

MISSION 6: HOSTAGE CRISIS

Shoot your way through the offices and cubicles of the bank's upper floors. Watch out for the frequent hostage situations.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you will move on to the next mission "Bad Politics". If you fail, that's the end of the game for this path. You'll see the losing ending cinematic and be offered a chance to retry.

FINALE: BAD POLITICS

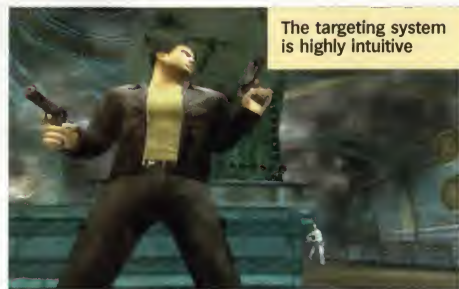
So, this Korean General wants his money? We think you should give him a couple of lumps on his head and hand him over to the FBI. He's tough, but you can do it.

PASS OR FAIL: If you pass this mission, you'll be treated to the winning ending cinematic. If you fail, you'll be treated to the losing ending cinematic. Though, at this stage, we're betting you'll retry.



GOOD-BAD COP POINTS

Kinda like The Force but without all that goofy wisdom



■ These are the left-most numbers down in the lower right corner of the HUD. The green/red numbers show how you stand as a cop. Headshots, for example, will result in a negative score, whereas a neutralising shot will result in a positive score.



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TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND (SLES 51848)

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Faster speed

Enter: moveinfast

Moon gravity

Enter: getitup

Perfect manuals

Enter: keepitsteady

Perfect rail balance

Enter: letitslide

Unlock all THUG movies

Enter: diglivd

JAK II: RENEGADE (SLES 51608)

Do the following tasks during gameplay to unlock these items.

Alternate scrap book

Collect 200 orbs

Big head

Collect 30 orbs

Big head mode

Collect 35 Orbs

Hero mode

Collect 200 orbs

Invulnerability

Collect 175 orbs

Jak's Goatee

Collect 5 orbs

Level select

Collect 145 orbs

Mirror world

Collect 15 orbs

Peace Maker Gun Course

Collect 105 orbs

Reverse races

Collect 135 orbs

Scene Player Act 1

Collect 65 orbs

Scene Player Act 2

Collect 95 orbs

Scene Player Act 3

Collect 125 orbs

Scrap book

Collect 55 orbs

Small head

Collect 45 orbs

Small head mode

Collect 40 orbs

Unlimited ammo

Collect 155 orbs

Unlimited Dark Jak

Collect 165 orbs

Vulcan Fury

Collect 75 orbs

LOONEY TUNES: BACK IN ACTION (SLES 51794)

Enter at the password screen under the options, from the main menu.

Duck Danger costume

DANGERD

Hen Grenade attack

HENSAWAY

COMMANDOS 2 (SLES 50859)

Hard 1 mission

PLKUM

Hard 2 mission

JE5SH

Hard 3 mission

DFY3B

Hard 4 mission

K9D3H

Hard 5 mission

NMWQ9

Hard 6 mission

16G3L

Hard 7 mission

WL3CZ

Hard 8 mission

LPQ6T

Hard 9 mission

SRCM8

Hard 10 mission

PAEN8

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND (SLES 51967)

At the main menu enter the following push button codes:

Unlock all drag tracks

→, ⊙, ←, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙

Unlock all drift tracks

←, ←, ←, ←, →, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙

Unlock all circuit tracks

↓, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙

Unlock all sprint tracks

↑, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ↓, ↓, ↓

MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN (SLES 51873)

All levels

Code: BUTTERFLY

Max ammo

Code: GOBY

Men with hats

Code: SEAHORSE

Silver bullet mode

Code: TILEFISH

All replay items

Code: GARIBALDI

Soldiers invisible

Code: TRIGGER

Bullet shield mode

Code: TANG

Always sniper

Code: PUFFER

Only head shots count

Code: MANDARIN

THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN (SLES 51897)

In the options menu hold ⊙+⊙ and enter the following:

All reward cars

⊗, ⊙, ⊗, ⊙

Tripping mode

⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙

Blow up vehicles in one hit

⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙

Fastest cars

⊙, ⊙, ⊙, ⊙

Infinite car health

⊙, ⊗, ⊙, ⊗

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Press 2



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PIN	GAME	CHEAT
18730	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Unlock All Levels
18731	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Unlock Max Ammo
18732	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Bullet Shield Mode
18733	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Sniper Mode
18734	Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	Silver Bullet Mode
20171	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Aragorn
20172	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Frodo
20173	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Gandalf
20174	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Gimli
20175	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Legolas
20176	LOTR: The Return of the King	1000 Experience Points for Sam
17531	True Crime: Streets of LA	All Driving Upgrades
17532	True Crime: Streets of LA	All Fighting Moves
17533	True Crime: Streets of LA	All Gunplay Skills
17534	True Crime: Streets of LA	Impound Garage Cars Unlocked
18971	Simpsons: Hit & Run	All Reward Cars
18972	Simpsons: Hit & Run	Infinite Car Health
18973	Simpsons: Hit & Run	Faster Cars
18974	Simpsons: Hit & Run	Jumping Car
18975	Simpsons: Hit & Run	Blow up Vehicles in one Hit
18976	Simpsons: Hit & Run	Night Time Mode
19671	NFS: Underground	Unlock all Drag Tracks
19672	NFS: Underground	Unlock all Drift Tracks
19673	NFS: Underground	Unlock all Circuit Tracks
19674	NFS: Underground	Unlock all Sprint Tracks
13161	Grand Theft Auto Vice City	Health
13162	Grand Theft Auto Vice City	Armour
13166	Grand Theft Auto Vice City	Attract Followers
13165	Grand Theft Auto Vice City	Lower Wanted Level
13163	Grand Theft Auto Vice City	Floating Cars
13164	Grand Theft Auto Vice City	Weapons
13167	Grand Theft Auto Vice City	Unlock Tank
12271	Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	Level Skip
12861	X-Men 2: Wolverine's Revenge	Level Select
12862	X-Men 2: Wolverine's Revenge	All Costumes
12863	X-Men 2: Wolverine's Revenge	Cheat Menu
12864	X-Men 2: Wolverine's Revenge	Cerebro Files
01391	World Rally Championship	Greater Power
01394	World Rally Championship	Underwater Graphics
01393	World Rally Championship	Overhead View
01392	World Rally Championship	No Chassis
09871	The Scorpion King	Master Code
09872	The Scorpion King	Full Health and Weapons
06795	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Recover Health
06796	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Hidden Mission
06797	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Bonus Stage
06792	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	All Missions
06791	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	All Characters
06794	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Increase Items
06793	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Unlock all Items
10174	Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	Alternate Credits
10171	Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	All Power-Ups
10173	Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	All FMV Sequences
10172	Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	All Warp Gates
12722	Wakeboarding Unleashed	All Boards
12721	Wakeboarding Unleashed	Master Code
12724	Wakeboarding Unleashed	Level Select
12723	Wakeboarding Unleashed	All Gaps
06841	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Invincibility
06848	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Snipe-A-Rama
06847	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Perfectionist
06844	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Gold Medal for Current Mission
06846	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Bullet Shield Mode
06842	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Unlimited Ammo
06845	Medal of Honor: Frontline	Photon Torpedoes
06843	Medal of Honor: Frontline	1 Shot Kills
09922	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	God Mode
09921	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Level Skip
09923	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	All Weapons
09925	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Nailgun Mode
09924	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Level Select
15812	Dead to Rights	All Disarms Open
15811	Dead to Rights	10,000 Bullets
15815	Dead to Rights	Invisibility
15814	Dead to Rights	Level Select
15816	Dead to Rights	Invincibility
15813	Dead to Rights	Endless Armour
10134	Blade 2	Unlimited Ammo
10131	Blade 2	All Levels
10132	Blade 2	All Weapons
10133	Blade 2	Infinite Health
07711	Blood Omen 2	Weapons and Armour
14748	BloodRayne	Juggy
14743	BloodRayne	Time Factor
14742	BloodRayne	Fill Bloodlust
14741	BloodRayne	God Mode
14744	BloodRayne	Level Select
14747	BloodRayne	Gratuitous Dismemberment
14746	BloodRayne	Show Weapons
14745	BloodRayne	Enemy Freeze
12580	007 Nightfire	Bigger Sniper Rifle Clip
12581	007 Nightfire	Level Select
12582	007 Nightfire	Upgrade Q Gadgets
04801	Aggressive Inline	All Levels
04803	Aggressive Inline	Super Spin
04802	Aggressive Inline	All Secret Characters
06721	Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance	Invincibility and Level warp
06722	Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance	Super Character
02151	Crazy Taxi	Secret Push Bike
04241	Cricket 2002	Super Batsman

gamestation

Your definitive guide to the ever expanding library of PlayStation 2 games.



So you've just bought a PlayStation 2, and you're confronted by a dauntingly huge line-up of games to choose from at your local gaming store. Now what?

GameStation is OPS2's one-stop guide to getting an idea of what's hot and what's not. As time goes on and new games come out, we drop some of the older games that don't warrant being remembered, replacing them with newer games that score well in the reviews section.

As PlayStation 2 owners we really are spoilt for choice. There are a massive choice of AAA quality games – many of which are bound to fall under your radar. OPS2 is here to make sure that not too many of them manage to slip through your fingers.

If you just want to find the best of the best, look for the games that receive a Bronze, Silver or Gold award. Enjoy your search.

GLOSSARY

Just got your PS2? It's your first console ever and you've bought the best magazine to give the latest and most up-to-date information but don't have a clue what we're going on about? Well, without wanting to patronise those gamers who've been around since the Atari 2600 by spelling out the meaning of gaming terms and acronyms in the reviews and previews, here's your 'at a glance' guide to all things PS2 and technical.

Afterburn: An extra kick of power in flight sims.

AI: Artificial Intelligence.

Analogue: Re: Dual Shock 2. Registering degrees of input, as opposed to digital's on/off status.

Boards: Snowboarders or games featuring the alpine sport.

Colin-op: Colin-operated arcade videogames.

Cut-scene: Explanatory, non-playable scene in videogame (also 'FMV').

CPU: Central Processor Unit. Brains of PS2.

Dev kits: Programmable PS2s used by developers.

D-pad: Direction pad on PS2 controller.

Dual Shock controller: Controller for PSone.

Dual Shock 2: Controller designed for PS2 (with analogue).

ECTS: European Computer Trade Show.

E3: Electronic Entertainment Expo (US).

Frame rate: Number of images drawn per second in games. Higher frame rate = smoother animation.

FPS: First-Person Shooter (eg Quake III).

Hack 'n' slash: Refers to game (usually fantasy) featuring blade combat.

High res: High resolution (graphics).

HUD: Head Up Display.

HUD: Screen furniture such as map, speedometer, etc.

Iconography: Graphical shorthand defining game, genre etc.

Low res: Refers to poor quality graphics.

L3: Pressing down on the PS2 controller's left joystick.

Mini-games: Bonus, playable games found in larger titles.

Polygon: Building block of videogame graphics.

PSone: The precursor to PS2. If you don't know what this is then frankly there's no hope for you.

Real-time: When one second of game time equals one second in the real world.

RPG: Role-playing game.

RTS: Real-time strategy.

R3: Pressing down on the PS2 controller's right joystick.

Sim: Simulation.

Strafe: Move sideways while looking straight.

USB: Port to connect peripherals such as keyboard to PS2.

**if there's a term, word or phrase that's still taxing your brain cells, let us know and we'll include it here.*

007 NIGHTFIRE ★ OVERALL 08

Aside from the occasionally iffy AI, this has enough variety to make a solid single player game, and the multiplayer gives it longevity.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

7 BLADES OVERALL 06

Ninja-styled adventure with a 'healthy' dose of chop-socky gameplay.

18 WHEELER OVERALL 06

Brash, chunky and colourful truck racer. Unfortunately it just doesn't offer enough substance to satisfy the hardened gamer.

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP OVERALL 07

The World Cup version of FIFA 2002 with more pizzazz, nifty effects for star players and a serious challenge at the highest difficulty level, but sadly lacking in game modes.

ACE COMBAT: DISTANT THUNDER OVERALL 07

Best Ace Combat yet. A graphically-polished flight sim with a variety of missions. Best with a flight-stick of some kind.

AFL LIVE 2004 OVERALL 06

Plays a better game of footy, but it's not a vast improvement over its predecessor.

AGGRESSIVE INLINE ★ OVERALL 08

There's more than enough Inline action to keep you impressed and entertained until the next Tony Hawk says, "Buy me, dude!"

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

AIRBLADE ★ OVERALL 08

Intricate visuals, sublime handling, massive airs – everything you could want hoverboarding to be. Back to the Future anyone?

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2002 OVERALL 07

An enjoyable all-round game of baseball with oodles of depth, and surprisingly compelling to watch as well as to play.

AMPLITUDE ★ OVERALL 08

An addictive mixture of reflexes and music timing. Weak graphics but great gameplay.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

AQUA AQUA: WETRIX 2.0 OVERALL 07

Addictive, well-realised update of the N64 puzzler Wetrix. Essentially it's Tetris with water. Weird, but worthwhile.

ARCTIC THUNDER OVERALL 07

Crude visuals, but plenty of fast and furious gameplay.

ARMORED CORE 2 OVERALL 07

Infinitely-tweakable first-person mech shooter. Not for the casual gamer after a quick fix, but perfect for those who love their sims.

ARMY MEN AIR ATTACK: BLADE'S REVENGE OVERALL 02

Very dull helicopter game. Hardly surprising from arguably the worst series of games to grace a console.

ARMY MEN: GREEN ROGUE OVERALL 01

On-rail shooter that manages to sink to new depths of soldiering tedium. Avoid at all costs.

ATV OFFROAD FURY 2 ★ OVERALL 08

More of the same, with new tracks, riders, racing modes and plenty of good old fashioned fun.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

AUTO MODELISTA ★ OVERALL 08

The love-child of cel-shaded graphics and Gran Turismo. Despite its cartoony appearance, this is a fairly serious racing game.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

BACKYARD WRESTLING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME OVERALL 06

When they titled this brawler Don't Try This At Home – did they mean the game?

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE ★ OVERALL 08

Play D&D on a console! Quite simplistic and arcadey, but this is still a great RPG that adds nicely to the PS2's line up.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

YOUR KEY TO SHORTLIST

GOLD
Only for games that scored the elusive 10/10.

SILVER
Awarded to games with a mighty 9/10.

BRONZE
Given to games that scored an impressive 8/10.

SMALLER LEVELS, FEWER GUNS

Games you must play before the sequel ruins them. But be quick.



With the new Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles set to kick shell on PS2 next month, the time is ripe for a dose of retro action. The original Turtles arcade game, released in the early '90s, still stands as one of the greatest beat-'em-ups ever created. It boasted essential four-player gameplay, more enemies than you could shake a shuriken at and a staggering number of ways to beat them stupid. Slice them up with a sword, smash sewer covers into their faces, drown the buggers with jets of water from fire hydrants or just smack them silly with witches hats. You'll have to hunt around through a few old arcades to find it, but take a few mates and let the good times roll.

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL ★ OVERALL 08

Compelling and original. It manages to cross multiple genres and is bizarre, unique and engaging all at once.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

BLOODRAYNE ★ OVERALL 08

BloodRayne is an explosion of sex, action and violence. It's not going to tax your mind but it's so much fun you won't care.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

BOMBERMAN KART OVERALL 07

As much fun as four people can have with fifty bucks. It's worth it just for the original 2D Bomberman.

BUFFY 2: CHAOS BLOODS OVERALL 07

Full of action and adventure, Chaos Bloods is a worthy addition to the Buffy legacy.

BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT ★ OVERALL 08

An even more intense racing experience than its predecessor. The Fast & the Furious in a video game.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE ★ OVERALL 09

Better whip and dungeon action than Larry Wachowski's last all-nighter at the Hellfire Club.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

CLUB FOOTBALL ★ OVERALL 08

The second best soccer game on PS2. Superior to the FIFA games but PES still gives it a thrashing.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 4 ★ OVERALL 08

One for experts and newbies alike, Colin 4 is a superlative rally sim with a tank full of fun.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

COMMANDOS 2 ★ OVERALL 08

A daunting but extremely worthy and rewarding strategy game where the player controls a team of operatives in WWII missions.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

CONFLICT DESERT STORM II ★ OVERALL 08

It's not perfect but it improves on its predecessor by a long shot. War may be hell but this certainly isn't.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER OVERALL 07

A fantastic trip down memory lane for old school veterans, but Contra may confuse or confound the contemporary gamer.

CRASH NITRO KART OVERALL 06

With a little spit and polish, CNK could have been in pole position, but its faults leave it lagging behind.

CRAZY TAXI ★ OVERALL 08

Arcade thrills aplenty in this no-holds-barred city-smashing racer. If you want speed, buy this now.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

CRICKET 2002 ★ OVERALL 08

The best leather-on-willow sim on any console, ever. Relax and make like it's always summer.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

DANCING STAGE MEGAMIX OVERALL 07

Top sweaty disco fun, marred by a flimsy selection of songs. All together now – big fish, little fish, cardboard box.

DARK CHRONICLE ★ OVERALL 09

If you've finished FFX and need a new fix, look no further. This is top-tier RPG fare, an essential purchase.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

DEAD TO RIGHTS OVERALL 07

Near endless gunplay with hand-to-hand scrapping, backed up with a dark tale. DTR is good, mindless fun.

DEF JAM VENDETTA ★ OVERALL 08

Some more options would have made this a true champion, but it's still a worthy contender. SmackDown watch out!

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

DEUS EX ★ OVERALL 09

The thinking man's action shooter and genre-busting game that redefines expectations. Superb.

SILVER
PlayStation 2



DEVIL MAY CRY ★ OVERALL 09
Melding battling with lush surroundings and a superb gothic atmosphere. One of the best PS2 games yet? Definitely.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

DEVIL MAY CRY 2 ★ OVERALL 08
Die-hards may cry at the new direction, but there's still enough gorgeous style and firearms in DMC2 to satisfy action junkies.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

DISNEY'S EXTREME SKATE ADVENTURE ★ OVERALL 08
Gene warfare and confusing puzzles abound in this bizarre manga adventure.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

DOG'S LIFE OVERALL 07
This canine caper is an inspired look at the adventure genre that will keep you more entertained than a dog four balls.

DRAGON'S LAIR OVERALL 02
Unplayable retro adventure. Should have stayed firmly stuck on the Laser Disc where it belonged.

DROPSHIP: UNITED PEACE FORCE ★ OVERALL 08
Impressive combat sim that rewards commitment with paced and varied gameplay.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

DYNASTY WARRIORS 3 ★ OVERALL 08
More of the same great mass battles and explosive action, marred only slightly by samey gameplay.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

DYNASTY WARRIORS 3: XTREME LEGENDS OVERALL 07
A solid, entertaining expansion pack that will have Dynasty Warriors 3 fans whooping with joy.

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 OVERALL 07
Dynasty Warriors 4 is an accomplished title, but due to its lack of innovation, it's unlikely to get many pulses racing.

ENDGAME ★ OVERALL 09
Sets a new standard in the lightgun shooter genre: innovative, refreshing and most of all, a tonne of fun.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

ENTER THE MATRIX OVERALL 07
Despite a painful lack of depth ETM is an enjoyable package for anyone after another dose of Matrix mayhem.

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND ★ OVERALL 08
Adventure that includes smart visuals, witty script and intelligent puzzles.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

ESPN NATIONAL HOCKEY NIGHT OVERALL 06
Other hockey sims on the market with better gameplay put this in the sin bin.

ESPN NBA BASKETBALL ★ OVERALL 08
ESPN NBA Basketball slam dunks the competition with its slick presentation and innovative modes.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

ESPN NFL FOOTBALL ★ OVERALL 09
If this game's quality was put into a local game, the results would be incredible. Until then, go for the stars and stripes.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

ESPN NHL HOCKEY ★ OVERALL 09
A fast flowing game with plenty of depth. A no-brainer for hockey fans but a still a solid game for everyone else.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES OVERALL 07
EverQuest Online Adventures offers rewards for the persistent, but it can be a pretty tough slog getting there.

EVIL TWIN OVERALL 05
Adventure from the dark side of platforming. Average, so-so animation with 76 levels of twisted plot.

EXTERMINATION OVERALL 07
Alien-inspired survival horror-fest that is set in a deserted Antarctic research base. Positively crawling with cool design innovations.

EXTREME-G 3 ★ OVERALL 08
A neon beast of a future bike racer that requires skill and brains. Takes some 'inspiration' from the Winout series.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

EYE TOY: PLAY ★ OVERALL 08
Forget the fact that it's marketed at casual gamers; give it a try, because when it comes to Eye Toy, seeing is believing.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

EYE TOY: GROOVE OVERALL 06
Groove is a victim of the diversity of its predecessor. The lack of variety offered by this dancing title undoubtedly narrows its appeal.

F1 CAREER CHALLENGE OVERALL 07
At last, an F1 game that makes a priority of excitement and thrills over worthy but dull simulation.

FANTAVISION OVERALL 05
The world's first fireworks game. Not enormous, but of rare and random beauty.

FERRARI F355 CHALLENGE OVERALL 07
One of the most realistic racing simulations ever. More for driving game experts than casual racers.

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004 OVERALL 07
The best FIFA yet but it's miles behind PES3. It has all the bells and whistles, but the gameplay is still lacking.

FINAL FANTASY X ★ OVERALL 09
Nothing else needs to be said about this brilliant RPG. A classic Square adventure with next-gen presentation and production.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

FORMULA ONE 2003 ★ OVERALL 08
Another F1 corker! All the drivers, tracks and cars included. Load it up and feel the speed. Feel the need for speed.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

FREEDOM FIGHTERS ★ OVERALL 09
Slight imperfections are swamped by an utterly addictive and clever game experience. You must play this.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

FUTURAMA OVERALL 06
With a bit more of polish this could have been shinier than Bender's metal ass.

FUR FIGHTERS ★ OVERALL 08
Cute fluffy creatures armed to the teeth with shotguns blast each other to pieces. The toy cupboard will never look innocent again.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GHOSTHUNTER ★ OVERALL 08
It doesn't quite live up to its (huge) potential but it's original, scary, exciting and well worth a look.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GHOST RECON OVERALL 07
A squad-based first person shooter that suffers from a cumbersome interface for ordering troops about, often degenerating into arcade-style run-and-gun gaming.

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO OVERALL 06
The Reaper might be cool, but loading times hamper this port of a complex PC battle game.

GITAROO MAN ★ OVERALL 08
If you have a PS2 collection, you should definitely have at least one game like this one in there! Check it out.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GLOBAL TOURING CHALLENGE: AFRICA OVERALL 07
An impressive racer that is further lifted by clever use of interesting locations.

GRAND THEFT AUTO 3 ★ OVERALL 10
Not quite as good as its neon-soaked, '80s prequel but it's still fantastic fun and can now be found for bargain prices.

GOLD
PlayStation 2

GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY ★ OVERALL 10
Better than GTA 3: Cars, crooks, coke, and chaos with total freedom to do what you want. A must have for any gamer, serious or not.

GOLD
PlayStation 2

GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC ★ OVERALL 09
If you didn't know already, GT3 is the greatest racing game in the world. Speed down to the store and buy it now.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

GRAN TURISMO CONCEPT: 2002 TOKYO-GENEVA ★ OVERALL 08
A more accessible version of GT3, with concept cars. Perfect for those who just want to race, rather than play mechanic.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GREGORY HORROR SHOW ★ OVERALL 08
A truly ghoulish treat for fans of the survival horror genre who fancy something a little different.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GUMBALL 3000 OVERALL 03
A decidedly crap racing title that fails to deliver on all fronts. Not something to bother with considering how many other decent racers are about.

G-SURFERS OVERALL 07
Futuristic racer that's improved by an innovative track editor.

GUILTY GEAR X ★ OVERALL 08
Pushes hard at beat-'em-up boundaries. The start of a new wave of next-gen 2D fighters.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

GUNGRAVE OVERALL 06
Bizarre Manga inspired shooting game with gorgeous visuals, but a distinct lack of depth to back up all that eye candy.

GUN GRIFFON BLAZE OVERALL 07
A mech shooter for robot obsessive-types everywhere.

TOP 5

LEAST EXTREME SPORTS



1. FANTAVISION

Watch the fireworks making purdy colours and try not to fall asleep.

2. CHESSMASTER

We're all for playing with someone's pieces – so long as that someone is Heather Graham and not a chess board.

3. SEGA BASS FISHING DUEL

Sega tried to jazz it up by calling it "Duel" but everyone knows the "B" in Bass Fishing is silent.

4. PINBALL

Yes, it lets you put your balls on the table without getting arrested but that can only motivate you for so long...

5. DISNEY GOLF

Taking one of the least interesting sports out there and slapping a bunch of sissy-boy Disney characters in is not the recipe for excitement.

HALF-LIFE ★ OVERALL 09
The award-winning PC first-person shooter/adventure arrives on PS2 in resplendent form. An essential purchase.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS ★ OVERALL 08
Simplistic puzzles and gorgeous graphics make this a winner for younger fans of the books and films.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

HARRY POTTER: QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP OVERALL 07
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup is an entertainingly original title, but lacking in variety and challenge.

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN ★ OVERALL 09
A disturbingly realistic take on living the life of a hired killer. Not one for the squeamish, but it contains brilliant gaming.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

HUNTER: THE RECKONING WAYWARD OVERALL 07
It lacks any real uniqueness but looks good and plays well enough to be forgiven.

INDIANA JONES & THE EMPEROR'S TOMB OVERALL 07
High adventure 3D platform gaming let down by some unforgivable technical issues.

ISS 2 OVERALL 07
More arcadey than PES with better commentary, but dodgy ball physics and animation. Not for soccer purists.

JAK II: RENEGADE ★ OVERALL 10
Darker and more challenging than its predecessor, Jak II is the best platform game we've ever seen!

GOLD
PlayStation 2

JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY ★ OVERALL 09
A brilliant platformer from the makers of Crash Bandicoot that introduces two heroes you'll be seeing a lot more of.

SILVER
PlayStation 2

JAMES BOND 007: AGENT UNDER FIRE ★ OVERALL 08
A thrilling single-player Bond experience, with a great four-player mode and beautiful Bond girls.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH ★ OVERALL 08
A little lightweight but the multiplayer modes and arcade missions keep Dredd out of jail.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

JURASSIC PARK: PROJECT GENESIS OVERALL 07
A prehistoric premise, sure. But Operation Genesis puts a fresh spin on the God sim genre. Hammond would be proud.

KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO OVERALL 06
A padded-out Training mode makes up for this smart ninja fighter's otherwise rather limited nature.

KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER ★ OVERALL 08
A bit too similar to Tony Hawk for our liking, but still the best surfing game around.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

KESSEN OVERALL 07
A real-time strategy game set in feudal Japan, where you get to command a huge army. Strategy fans only.

KINGDOM HEARTS ★ OVERALL 08
A beautifully produced RPG with Disney and Square characters. Don't let the kiddie vibe fool you, this one's very tough.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

KLONOA 2: LUNATA'S VEIL ★ OVERALL 08
Cute and cheerful platformer featuring the lovable glove-eared blue cat-rabbit hybrid. Fun stuff.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001 OVERALL 06
A more-than-competent boxing sim. Not a match for Rocky though.

KYA: DARK LINEAGE OVERALL 07
A well-rounded platforming experience. Missing a few bells and whistles but very respectable fun.

LARGO WINCH OVERALL 05
Based on a French comic character, this spy game is too linear, and lacks the interactivity that is needed to maintain a gamer's attention.

LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE ★ OVERALL 08
Legacy of Kain: Defiance is a fitting new chapter. Huge, bloody and pretty. Get ready to spill some blood.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING OVERALL 05
'Violent ballet' with a shortage of modes and options. There are much better recreations of Pro wrestling.

LE MANS 24 HOURS ★ OVERALL 08
Accessible for gamers daunted by sim-style vehicle handling, but has depth and thrills.

BRONZE
PlayStation 2



LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING	★ OVERALL 09
Meaty button-mashing for the masses. Movie-to-game licenses are almost never this good. And it's a two-player game.	SILVER PlayStation 2
MACE GRIFFIN: BOUNTY HUNTER	★ OVERALL 08
A hype-free, classy intermesh of different styles makes for one of the most compelling games of the year.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
MADDEN NFL 2004	★ OVERALL 09
Not just for those who already love padding-up, this is a great game, whatever your tastes.	SILVER PlayStation 2
MANHUNT	★ OVERALL 08
Manhunt is a solid, enjoyable stealth-'em-up with utterly engaging gameplay. Not one for the kiddies, however.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2	★ OVERALL 08
Whilst impressive in many areas and exceptional in some, MHPB2 doesn't quite live up to expectations.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
MAX PAYNE	★ OVERALL 08
A fine shooting game that is underrated. Fantastic innovations and a very cinematic feel lifts the action.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
MAXIMO	★ OVERALL 08
A tribute to Ghosts 'n' Goblins and an excellent mix of retro and modern gaming.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN	★ OVERALL 09
A game? A movie? MOH is a gruelling experience that packs the best of both worlds.	SILVER PlayStation 2
METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM	★ OVERALL 08
If you love blowing stuff up then this will do more than whet your appetite for destruction.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY	★ OVERALL 10
A must-own, state-of-the-art tactical espionage game that's reason enough to buy a PS2. A superbly paced, gripping story.	GOLD PlayStation 2
METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE	★ OVERALL 08
Incredibly comprehensive Metal Gear package for newbies but MGS2 owners will struggle to find \$110's worth.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
MICROMACHINES	★ OVERALL 08
Nothing particularly 'next-gen' about this instalment of the series, but an excellent racing diversion nonetheless.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE - OPERATION SURMA	★ OVERALL 08
Captures the stealthy stuff perfectly but ignores the other MI staples - car chases and hot chicks!	BRONZE PlayStation 2
MONSTERS, INC.	OVERALL 04
Disney Platform game, based on the film. Initially amusing but sloppy and basic with a lifespan of no more than a few hours, though the film clips are entertaining.	
MOTO GP	OVERALL 07
Gran Turismo on two wheels? A fantastic motorbike sim that rewards repeated play.	
MOTO GP2	OVERALL 07
A refreshing bike racer. Slightly repetitive gameplay and a shallow multiplayer, but slick, fast and realistic. Excellent 3D graphics and race replay facility.	
MOTO GP3	OVERALL 07
A little repetitive and far too similar to the last two games. Still, it's the best motorbike game on the system thus far.	
MUSIC 3000	★ OVERALL 09
A mightily authoritative music title, which works as a fun diversion or a serious tool. Unmissable for wannabe bedroom artists.	SILVER PlayStation 2
MX SUPERFLY 2003: FEAT RICKY CARMICHAEL	OVERALL 07
Polished and engaging motocross sim that utilises its subject matter to great effect. An excellent extreme game.	
MX RIDER	OVERALL 06
Motocross/supercross sim that lacks the true grittiness and excitement of the sport.	
NBA 2K3	★ OVERALL 08
Not only realistic, but packed with plenty of features as well, offering a wide selection of game modes.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
NBA HOOPZ	OVERALL 06
Instant arcade-styled basketball sim, but there are better ones on the street.	
NBA STREET VOLUME 2	★ OVERALL 09
A must-own for hoop fans and anyone looking for a solid multiplayer title.	SILVER PlayStation 2

STILL THE ONE

Ancient games that can still make your head spin



MOTO GP

Namco may deserve a solid smack to the head for the exercises in mediocrity that are Moto GP2 and Moto GP3, but at least Moto GP was a great effort for its time. The backgrounds were a little sparse but the graphics for the bikes themselves - and especially the animation - was top notch. Perhaps the best feature was the ability to choose between Arcade and Simulation gameplay. Thrill junkies could throw themselves around the track and forget about real-world physics, while simulation nuts got to tinker with the bikes and shift between the front and back brakes to control their slides. Why bother forking out top coin for the new Moto GP games when the original offers everything they do, bar the odd bell and whistle? You can pick it up for criminally low prices too if you look hard enough.

NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2	★ OVERALL 08
A must-own for hoop fans and anyone looking for a solid multiplayer title.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND	★ OVERALL 08
Sexy, in A1 nick, goes like a greased rat up a drain pipe, ground shaking stereo, no previous owners. It's a steal.	SILVER PlayStation 2
NFL 2K3	★ OVERALL 09
This is the game to own for anyone into American football thanks to its ultra-realistic graphics and gameplay.	SILVER PlayStation 2
NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB	★ OVERALL 08
American football game that has unique features, but unable to compete with Madden 2003.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
NHL 2K3	★ OVERALL 08
Excellent simulation settings for the die-hard fans, and plenty of arcade thrills for the rest of us.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
NHL 2004	★ OVERALL 08
PS2's finest NHL romp. You'll enjoy this even if you think Wayne Gretzky is some kind of Polish Soup.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
NY RACE	OVERALL 05
Average future taxi racer, based on the opening sequence of Luc Besson's sci-fi epic The Fifth Element. Nothing crazy to see here.	
ONI	OVERALL 07
New character animation in an enjoyable 3rd person sci-fi romp.	
ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS	★ OVERALL 08
Impressive survival horror that lets the PlayStation 2 run riot. Does suffer from an itchy PAL conversion, though.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
OPERATION WINBACK	OVERALL 06
Lacks variety, but still an enjoyable stealth shooter, nevertheless.	
ORPHEN	OVERALL 04
A disappointing anime-inspired Japanese RPG.	
PARAPPA THE RAPPER 2	OVERALL 07
Rhythm action game from Japan in which you play a rapping dog. Simple but compelling gameplay. Short life span and only really worth revisiting for nostalgia.	
PARIS-DAKAR RALLY	OVERALL 05
Based on the race of the same name, this sim does little to inspire interest.	
PENNY RACERS	OVERALL 04
A half-baked and underfed GT3, with just a few good tracks, it's a difficult one to recommend to anybody wanting a great racer.	
POLICE 24/7	OVERALL 05
Basic cop-shot light gun game with motion capture option. Frantic and fast but lacks structure and individuality. Just another on-rails shoot-'em-up.	
PRIDE FC	★ OVERALL 08
The new king of the ring! Pride FC is the most realistic fighting simulation available on any system to date. Great stuff!	BRONZE PlayStation 2
PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME	★ OVERALL 09
Prince? More like the King. Ubi Soft has crafted one of the greatest PS2 adventure titles yet!	SILVER PlayStation 2
PRISONER OF WAR	OVERALL 07
Escaping from POW camps is all well and good, but you remain a prisoner of often rigid game objectives. Even so, this is a bold, compelling adventure game.	
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3	★ OVERALL 09
If you know who Kewell is you must own this. The best soccer, sports and multiplayer game on your PS2.	SILVER PlayStation 2
PROJECT EDEN	★ OVERALL 08
Look beyond some not-great visuals and you'll lose weeks to this complex and satisfying first-person shooter/adventure.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
QUAKE III	★ OVERALL 09
In four-player, this FPS is solid multiplayer fun. A technical tour de force. It runs smoothly and looks absolutely gorgeous.	SILVER PlayStation 2
RATCHET & CLANK	★ OVERALL 09
Pure platforming bliss from the company behind the original Spyro the Dragon titles on the PSone.	SILVER PlayStation 2
RATCHET & CLANK 2: LOCKED AND LOADED	★ OVERALL 09
Everything you could want in a sequel. It plays brilliantly and though it lacks innovation it's still a real charmer.	SILVER PlayStation 2

RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC	OVERALL 07
Rayman offers plenty of 'armless fun but he's no match for Ratchets or Rocoons.	
READY 2 RUMBLE: ROUND 2	OVERALL 07
A marvellous, arcade-based comedy boxing game, pitting ridiculous cartoon fighters against each other.	
RED FACTION	★ OVERALL 08
Ace first-person shooter that melds MGS-style tactics and the all-out blasting of the hallowed Quake III.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA X	★ OVERALL 09
A captivating story, cinematic atmosphere, kinetic action, frights, thrills and copious amounts of blood-letting.	
RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN	★ OVERALL 08
Only the high standards of the FPS competition prevent this from being a truly essential buy.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
REZ	★ OVERALL 09
Exploring the relationship between sound and colour this techno shooter provides pure gameplay. Unique, and refreshing.	SILVER PlayStation 2
RIDGE RACER V	OVERALL 07
A popular racer, but high hopes were scuppered by the limited size and a lack of originality.	
RING OF RED	★ OVERALL 08
A mech RTS that's fun? Oh yes. A must-buy for the discerning robo-fetishist after something different.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
ROBOTEC: BATTLECRY	OVERALL 07
A cel-shaded shooter that brings the classic anime to life, but is held back by a decidedly clunky control system.	
ROCKY	★ OVERALL 08
The best boxing title available for PS2. Has a great story mode that takes the player through the movies.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
RUGBY 2004	OVERALL 07
Covers the entirety of the sport well but fails to capture the true feel of it.	
RUGBY LEAGUE	★ OVERALL 08
An entertaining game which neglected NRL fans can finally enjoy. Long-awaited, but very satisfying!	BRONZE PlayStation 2
RUN LIKE HELL	OVERALL 07
A refreshing sci-fi survival horror title with a host of famous names handling the voice acting.	
RYGAR: THE LEGENDARY ADVENTURE	OVERALL 07
This would make a fine and worthy addition to any action fan's game collection. Brevity is the only pain.	
SALT LAKE 2002	OVERALL 03
Soulless Winter Olympics game. Decent weather effects but the majority of events are rather tedious.	
SHADOW OF MEMORIES	★ OVERALL 08
Filmic adventure that keeps the surprises coming with a serpentine plot.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
SHINOBI	★ OVERALL 08
Shinobi is the kind of frantic, shallow, old school arcade game we don't see enough of anymore. A fast and bloody good time.	BRONZE PlayStation 2
SILENT HILL 2	★ OVERALL 09
One of the most atmospheric and genuinely frightening titles on PS2. Like all of your worst nightmares rolled in to one game.	SILVER PlayStation 2
SILENT HILL 3	★ OVERALL 09
The nastiest game on PlayStation 2 - we dare you to play it!	SILVER PlayStation 2
SILENT SCOPE 2	OVERALL 07
A worthwhile update of this arcade sniper sim, though the formula is looking tired now.	
SILPHEED: THE LOST PLANET	OVERALL 03
Tedious top-down shooter. No-one bought a PS2 for games like this.	
SIR ALEX FERGUSON'S PLAYER MANAGER 2002	OVERALL 06
Adept footy management sim, but lacks the killer goal.	
SKY ODYSSEY	★ OVERALL 08
A flight sim where you don't have to shoot anything. Just complete crazy missions.	BRONZE PlayStation 2



SLED STORM OVERALL 06
A maxed-out, splashy remake of the PSone racing classic, very much in the SSX mould.

SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT OVERALL 07
Deep & stylish this game suffers from disproportionate leaps in difficulty that can be off-putting.

SMUGGLER'S RUN 2: HOSTILE TERRITORIES OVERALL 07
Impressively big, fast and frantic, but not much different to its predecessor.

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALS ★ OVERALL 08
Engrossing tactical action, with excellent online play, but if you haven't got broadband you won't fully appreciate it. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

SONIC HEROES OVERALL 07
Sonic Heroes is a solid platformer that pays homage to its classic routes but the ol' hedgehog has failed to evolve...

SOUL CALIBUR 2 ★ OVERALL 20
The cartoon kart racer in its simplest form. Lacks originality and is a poor Mario Kart rip-off, but uses cel-shading to nice effect. **GOLD** PlayStation 2

SPIDER-MAN OVERALL 07
It doesn't display huge innovations over its PSone counterpart, although it's a solid and enjoyable Spidey title either way.

SPY HUNTER ★ OVERALL 08
Pretend to be James Bond. Captures the spirit of the original game and adds further shiny next-gen knobs. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

SSX 3 ★ OVERALL 09
Delivers an avalanche of adrenalin rushing action, unlike any other snowboarding title out there. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

STARSKY & HUTCH OVERALL 07
Given the lack of gameplay variety this cop caper shouldn't be as consistently enjoyable as it is.

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER OVERALL 07
Gorgeous to look at, taking the gamer into the Star Wars universe, but is let down by repetitive gameplay.

STAR WARS: CLONE WARS OVERALL 07
One for the Star Wars collectors, and a great battlefield in its own right. Shallow but still worth investigation.

STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER ★ OVERALL 09
Mesmerising 3D Star Wars blaster with engaging missions and film-perfect sound effects. Great fun. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

STAR WARS: SUPER BOMBAD RACING OVERALL 05
Banal cartoon kart racer. The Force is weak with this one.

STATE OF EMERGENCY OVERALL 06
A shallow but worryingly enjoyable game that puts the player at the centre of a riot.

STREET FIGHTER EX3 OVERALL 06
A decent enough 2D/3D fighting game, but is milking the series to death. There are better 2D fighters from the same company.

STREET HOOPS OVERALL 06
More about collecting fancy duds than having a decent game of basketball, which is why this hoops title misses from the line.

STUNTMAN ★ OVERALL 08
Won't have the wide appeal of the Driver games due to its difficulty, but it's an ingenious concept that thrills and entertains. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

SUMMER HEAT BEACH VOLLEYBALL OVERALL 07
The best crack at beach volleyball we've seen, but nothing to really set your gaming soul on fire.

SUMMONER 2 ★ OVERALL 08
Follow-up to the RPG launch title. More action orientated than the original, but still an epic adventure for fans of fantasy. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

SUPERCAR STREET CHALLENGE OVERALL 04
A by-the-book arcade racing game round desolate cities. Nothing to recommend it.

SWORD OF THE SAMURAI OVERALL 07
Sword of the Samurai is a slow, ponderous, but intelligent game that combines strategy with gore.

TARZAN FREERIDE OVERALL 04
Based on a Disney film of the same name, this tries to be different with 'surfing' tree branches, but it doesn't work.

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT ★ OVERALL 08
Fantastically playable and graphically spectacular beat-'em-up. The tagging moves make it a worthwhile purchase. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

TEKKEN 4 ★ OVERALL 09
Continuing the tradition of fighting game excellence. The first Tekken game to include free-movement. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

TENCHU: WRATH OF HEAVEN ★ OVERALL 08
An infusion of ninja style and killer gameplay across nine sumptuous levels. A great return to form for a classic title. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES OVERALL 06
Like Arnie, this game is a likeable dinosaur. Big guns and explosions but last-generation gameplay.

THE GETAWAY ★ OVERALL 09
Sony's answer to Grand Theft Auto, with a decidedly darker and nastier storyline. Offers an amazingly life-like replica of London. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

THE HOBBIT OVERALL 07
The Hobbit is a game devoid of challenge and originality, and strictly for the younger Tolkien fans.

THE HULK OVERALL 07
Not a smash-hit; but not damaged goods either. An enjoyable beat 'em' up; shame about those stealth sections though.

THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN ★ OVERALL 08
Combine the show's best elements with the best of GTA and you've got an instant, charming winner. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

THE SIMPSONS: ROAD RAGE OVERALL 06
It's Crazy Taxi but with Bart and Homer behind the wheel.

THE SIMS ★ OVERALL 09
A one of a kind gaming experience that even your mum will enjoy, with extras to make your PC gaming friends jealous. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

THE THING ★ OVERALL 08
Not only does it do justice to the classic horror film, but also introduces fear and trust issues to the survival-horror genre. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

THE WEAKEST LINK OVERALL 04
You'll get more enjoyment playing along with the show than you will from putting up with the viper-tongued host.

THEME PARK WORLD OVERALL 07
Take on the role of a theme park tycoon for a day in this engaging god sim, where pleasing the crowds and getting those turnstiles a-spinning is your prime directive.

THIS IS FOOTBALL 2003 OVERALL 07
Has an excellent one-two passing system and is a solid football title, but it still plays in the shadow of Pro Evolution 2 and FIFA 2003.

THUNDERHAWK: OPERATION PHOENIX OVERALL 07
A brave attempt to blend arcade and sim with choppers.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004 ★ OVERALL 08
The best golf game on PS2, but we're holding our breath for next year's online version. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

TIME CRISIS 3 ★ OVERALL 08
Action-packed arcade bullet-fest with plenty of lure for the casual player. Very similar to Time Crisis 2 though. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

TIMESPLITTERS ★ OVERALL 09
Fun, fast, frantic and inventive first-person shooter. Buy it for the addictive split-screen multiplayer madness. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

TIMESPLITTERS 2 ★ OVERALL 10
Takes the multiplayer from TimeSplitters and adds heaps of options. Major visual upgrades, i-Link for 16-player games - the works! **GOLD** PlayStation 2

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL ★ OVERALL 10
Move over Snake, Sam's the new special agent in town! Splinter Cell is an innovative game with some very cool touches. **GOLD** PlayStation 2

TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS ★ OVERALL 08
A little on the slow side but there's no doubting Lara's appeal. The original superstar is back! **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4 ★ OVERALL 10
With some new moves, the series is taken in a new direction. Skate around, interact with locals and do things at your own pace. **GOLD** PlayStation 2

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND ★ OVERALL 09
Neversoft has turned the Hawk series into a Vice City-style adventure. And they've lost none of the charm doing it. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

TOP 5 GAME NAMES THAT DON'T MAKE SENSE



1. FUR FIGHTERS

Nope, it's not soft porn about girls who are fanatical about shaving their naughty bits.

2. SHADOW OF MEMORIES

You'd think this was a dull story about some granny with Alzheimer's. You got the 'dull' part right.

3. DARK CLOUD

A pessimistic weatherman? Nope, it's an RPG that has nothing to do with clouds at all.

4. SPLINTER CELL

Thankfully it's not a about a Cambodian prison camp where they shove bamboo splinters into you!

5. AGGRESSIVE INLINE

If only this was about shopping trolley fights breaking out at the supermarket.

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA ★ OVERALL 08
A solid shooter that takes GTA's ideas and improves many of them, but loses something along the way. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

TUROK: EVOLUTION OVERALL 06
Boasts a wicked line-up of weapons and a variety of gaming styles, but suffers from crappy AI and frame rate issues.

TWIN CALIBER OVERALL 03
One of the shoddiest shooters around. Takes an interesting twin-pistol gaming concept and ruins it with slow gameplay, chronic control issues.

TWISTED METAL: BLACK ★ OVERALL 08
This is everything that you'd expect a Twisted Metal game to be on PS2 - and then some. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

UNLIMITED SAGA OVERALL 07
If you've never played a Sogo game, this will be unfamiliar and unspectacular but very challenging.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT ★ OVERALL 08
Totally over-the-top first-person shooter. Makes for a nice alternative to Quake III, but is outclassed totally by TimeSplitters 2. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

URBAN FREESTYLE SOCCER OVERALL 07
UFS is not worth pulling your shirt over your head for, but given a chance it's worth a run.

V-RALLY 3 ★ OVERALL 08
Not as instantly playable as WRC II Extreme or Colin McRae Rally 3 but effort pays off with some very satisfying racing. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

V8 SUPERCAR RACE DRIVER ★ OVERALL 09
Real damage. Real V8s. Real Aussie tracks. Real fun. The best racing game seen so far on the PlayStation 2! **SILVER** PlayStation 2

VICTORIOUS BOXERS OVERALL 04
Offbeat Japanese boxing title that lacks the killer punch. Pointless to track down while games such as Rocky are about.

VAMPIRE NIGHT ★ OVERALL 08
A vampire-blasting light gun extravaganza that looks great but has questionable replay value once the bad boys are all put to rest. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION ★ OVERALL 08
Packed with things to do, VF4 still lacks the outright fun that makes Soul Calibur a game for everyone. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

VIRTUA TENNIS 2 ★ OVERALL 08
Far and away the best Tennis simulation to grace the PS2. The World Circuit mode provides an awesome long term challenge. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED ★ OVERALL 08
It may be a little wet behind the ears but Unleashed has just as many thrills as its extreme brothers. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

WAR OF THE MONSTERS OVERALL 07
War of the Monsters is a big, brash game that explodes with charm and bums brightly... but not for very long.

WARHAMMER 40,000: FIRE WARRIOR OVERALL 07
A decent FPS with good controls and an interesting story but it doesn't bring anything new to the tabletop.

WIPEOUT FUSION ★ OVERALL 09
Style and substance are here in the most fully realised Wipeout yet. This future racer is as smart and extreme as it gets. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE: THUNDER TANKS OVERALL 07
Arcade tank sim that's brilliant in Four-player Deathmatch mode. Lacks lasting appeal in single-player mode, though.

WORMS 3D OVERALL 07
Drooling Worms fanatics - you know who you are - will grab this in a flash but anyone who drinks their tegulla without the little wriggly guys will want to wait for Worms 3D 2.

WRC 3 ★ OVERALL 09
An improvement over its esteemed predecessor, WRC 3 races neck and neck with McRae 04 for rally glory. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

WWE SMACKDOWN! HERE COMES THE PAIN! ★ OVERALL 09
The best there is, the best there was, and the best there ever shall be... until the next SmackDown! **SILVER** PlayStation 2

XIII ★ OVERALL 09
XIII takes the creaky old FPS and adds fresh style to make it a very worthy purchase. **SILVER** PlayStation 2

X-MEN 2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE ★ OVERALL 08
A quality action adventure that blends stealth with hand-to-hand combat. Only a few irritations deny it a higher score. **BRONZE** PlayStation 2

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22019	Marcel Desailly Soccer (Sport)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22023	Prince of Persia (Platform)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22024	Rainbow Six Raven Shield (Arcade)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22039	Rayman 3 (Platform)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22025	Rayman Bowling (Sport)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22026	Rayman Golf (Sport)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22027	Siberian Strike (Shoot 'em up)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22028	Skate & Slam (Sport)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22022	Splinter Cell (Arcade / Action)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24025	Splinter Cell Extended Ops (Arcade)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24026	XIII (Arcade / Action)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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22031	Anno 1503 AD (Adventure)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21525	Backgammon (Board Game)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22038	Black Hole (Adventure)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21204	Delta Bomber (Shoot 'em up)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22034	Gun Rush (Shoot 'em up)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22032	Infernal Gate (Shoot 'em up)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21238	Jungle Commando (Arcade)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21170	Katoo (Platform)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21544	Keep A Head (Platform)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22033	Klitchko Box Challenge (Sport)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22037	Kung Fu (Arcade, Beat 'em up)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22035	Laserblade Combat (Arcade)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21558	Phantom Mansion (Platform)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21403	Plasma Inferno (Shoot 'em up)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21432	Racing Fever (Arcade)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22040	S.W.A.T. Sniper (Shoot 'em up)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21303	Video Poker (Gambling)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22036	Warrior Kitten Shizuka (Platform)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22009	Wizard Pinball (Arcade)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21443	Zoys Rescue Mission (Platform)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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